

**Hymns and Hymnwriters  
of Denmark**

# Hymns and Hymnwriters of Denmark

By

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## Foreword

This book deals with a subject which is new to most English readers. For though Danish hymnody long ago became favorably known in Northern Europe, no adequate presentation of the subject has appeared in English. Newer American Lutheran hymnals contain a number of Danish hymns, some of which have gained considerable popularity, but the subject as a whole has not been presented.

A hymn is a child both of its author and of the time in which he lived. A proper knowledge of the writer and the age that gave it birth will enhance our understanding both of the hymn and of the spiritual movement it represents. No other branches of literature furnish a more illuminating index to the inner life of Christendom than the great lyrics of the Church. Henry Ward Beecher said truly: "He who knows the way that hymns flowed, knows where the blood of true piety ran, and can trace its veins and arteries to its very heart."

Aside from whatever value they may have in themselves, the hymns presented on the following pages therefore should convey an impression of the main currents within the Danish church, and the men that helped to create them.

The names of Kingo, Brorson and Grundtvig are known to many, but so far no biographies of these men except of the sketchiest kind have appeared in English. It is hoped that the fairly comprehensive presentation of their life and work in the following pages may fill a timely need.

In selecting the hymns care has been taken to choose those that are most characteristic of their authors, their times and the

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movements out of which they were born. While the translator has sought to produce faithfully the metre, poetry and sentiment of the originals, he has attempted no slavishly literal reproduction. Many of the finest Danish hymns are frankly lyrical, a fact which greatly increases the difficulty of translation. But while the writer is conscious that his translations at times fail to reproduce the full beauty of the originals, he still hopes that they may convey a fair impression of these and constitute a not unworthy contribution to American hymnody.

An examination of any standard American church hymnal will prove that American church song has been greatly enriched by transplantations of hymns from many lands and languages. If the following contribution from a heretofore meagerly represented branch of hymnody adds even a little to that enrichment, the writer will feel amply rewarded for the many hours of concentrated labor he has spent upon it.

Most of the translations are by the writer himself. When translations by others have been used, credit has been given to them except where only parts of a hymn have been presented.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 21st, 1944.

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## Early Danish Hymnody

DANISH HYMNODY, like that of other Protestant countries, is largely a child of the Reformation. The Northern peoples were from ancient times lovers of song. Much of their early history is preserved in poetry, and no one was more honored among them than the skjald who most skillfully presented their thoughts and deeds in song. Nor was this love of poetry lost with the transition from paganism to Christianity. The splendid folk songs of the Middle Ages prove conclusively that both the love of poetry and the skill in writing it survived into the new age. One can only wonder what fine songs the stirring advent of Christianity might have produced among a people so naturally gifted in poetry if the church had encouraged rather than discouraged this native gift.

But the Church of Rome evinced little interest in the ancient ways of the people among whom she took root. Her priests received their training in a foreign tongue; her services were conducted in Latin; and the native language and literature were neglected. Except for a few lawbooks, the seven hundred years of Catholic supremacy in Denmark did not produce a single book in the Danish language. The ordinances of the church, furthermore, expressly forbade congregational singing at the church services, holding that, since it was unlawful for the laity to preach, it was also impermissible for them to sing in the sanctuary. It is thus likely that a Danish hymn had never been sung, except on a

few special occasions in a Danish church before the triumph of the Reformation.

It is not likely, however, that this prohibition of hymn singing could be effectively extended to the homes or occasional private gatherings. Hans Thomisson, who compiled the most important of the early Danish hymnals, thus includes five "old hymns" in his collection with the explanation that he had done so to show "that even during the recent times of error there were pious Christians who, by the grace of God, preserved the true Gospel. And though these songs were not sung in the churches—which were filled with songs in Latin that the people did not understand—they were sung in the homes and before the doors".

Most of these earlier hymns no doubt were songs to the Virgin Mary or legendary hymns, two types of songs which were then very common and popular throughout the church. Of the few real hymns in use, some were composed with alternating lines of Danish and Latin, indicating that they may have been sung responsively. Among these hymns we find the oldest known Danish Christmas hymn, which, in the beautiful recast of Grundtvig, is still one of the most favored Christmas songs in Danish.

Christmas with gladness sounds,  
Joy abounds  
When praising God, our Father,  
We gather.  
We were in bondage lying,  
But He hath heard our prayer.  
Our inmost need supplying,  
He sent the Savior here.  
Therefore with praises ringing,  
Our hearts for joy are singing:  
All Glory, praise and might  
Be God's for Christmas night.

Right in a golden year,  
Came He here.  
Throughout a world confounded  
Resounded  
The tidings fraught with gladness  
for every tribe of man  
That He hath borne our sadness  
And brought us joy again,  
That He in death descended,  
Like sun when day is ended,  
(And rose on Easter morn  
With life and joy reborn.

He hath for every grief  
Brought relief.  
Each grateful heart His praises  
Now raises.  
With angels at the manger,  
We sing the Savior's birth,  
Who wrought release from danger  
And peace to man on earth,  
Who satisfies our yearning,  
And grief to joy is turning  
Till we with Him arise  
And dwell in Paradise.

The earliest Danish texts were translations from the Latin. Of these the fine translations of the well known hymns, "Stabat Mater Dolorosa", and Dies Est Laetitia in Ortu Regali", are still used, the latter especially in Grundtvig's beautiful recast "Joy is the Guest of Earth Today".

At a somewhat later period, but still well in advance of the Reformation, the first original Danish hymns must have appeared. Foremost among these, we may mention the splendid hymns, "I Will Now Hymn His Praises Who All My Sin Hath Borne", "On Mary, Virgin Undeified, Did God Bestow His Favor", and the beautiful advent hymn, "O Bride of Christ, Rejoice", all hymns that breathe a truly Evangelical spirit and testify to a remarkable skill in the use of a language then so sorely neglected.

Best known of all Pre-Reformation songs in Danish is "The Old Christian Day Song"—the name under which it was printed by Hans Thomisson. Of the three manuscript copies of this song, which are preserved in the library of Upsala, Sweden, the oldest is commonly dated at "not later than 1450". The song itself, however, is thought to be much older, dating probably from the latter part of the 14th century. Its place of origin is uncertain, with both Sweden and Denmark contending for the honor. The fact that the text printed by Hans Thomisson is identical, except for minor variations in dialect, with that of the oldest Swedish manuscript proves, at least, that the same version was also current in Danish, and that no conclusion as to its origin can now be drawn from the chance preservation of its text in Sweden. The following translation is based on Grundtvig's splendid revision of the song for the thousand years' festival of the Danish church. \*)

\*) Other translations:

"O day full of grace, which we behold" by C. Dowling in "Hymnal for Church and Home."

"The dawn from on high is on our shore" by S. D. Rodholm in "World of Song".

With gladness we hail the blessed day  
 Now out of the sea ascending,  
 Illuming the earth upon its way  
 And cheer to all mortals lending.  
 God grant that His children everywhere  
 May prove that the night is ending.

How blest was that wondrous midnight hour  
 When Jesus was born of Mary!  
 Then dawned in the East with mighty power  
 The day that anew shall carry  
 The light of God's grace to every soul  
 That still with the Lord would tarry.

Should every creature in song rejoice,  
 And were every leaflet singing,  
 They could not His grace and glory voice,  
 Though earth with their praise were ringing,  
 For henceforth now shines the Light of Life,  
 Great joy to all mortals bringing.

Like gold is the blush of morning bright,  
 When day has from death arisen.  
 Blest comfort too holds the peaceful night  
 When skies in the sunset glisten.  
 So sparkle the eyes of those whose hearts  
 In peace for God's summons listen.

Then journey we to our fatherland,  
 Where summer reigns bright and vernal.  
 Where ready for us God's mansions stand  
 With thrones in their halls supernal.  
 So happily there with friends of light  
 We joy in the peace eternal.

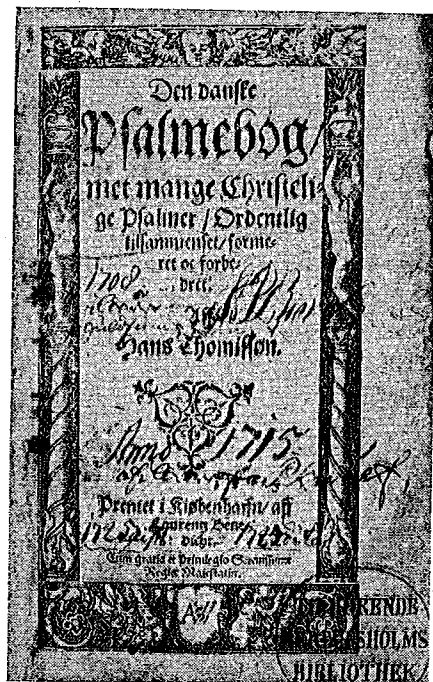
In this imperishable song, Pre-Reformation hymnody reached its highest excellence, an excellence that later hymnody seldom has surpassed. "The Old Christian Day Song" shows, besides, that Northern hymnwriters even "during the time of popery" had caught the true spirit of Evangelical hymnody. Their songs were few, and they were often bandied about like homeless waifs, but they embodied the purest Christian ideals of that day and served in a measure to link the old church with the new.

## Reformation Hymnody

THE DANISH Reformation began quietly about 1520, and culminated peacefully in the establishment of the Lutheran church as the church of the realm in 1536. The movement was not, as in some other countries, the work of a single outstanding reformer. It came rather as an almost spontaneous uprising of the people under several independent leaders, among whom men like Hans Tausen, Jorgen Sadolin, Claus Mortensen, Hans Spandemager and others merely stand out as the most prominent. And it was probably this very spontaneity which invested the movement with such an irresistible force that within a few years it was able to overthrow an establishment that had exerted a powerful influence over the country for more than seven centuries.

In this accomplishment Evangelical hymnody played a prominent part. Though the Reformation gained little momentum before 1526, the Papists began as early as 1527, to preach against "the sacrilegious custom of roaring Danish ballads at the church service". As no collection of hymns had then been published, the hymns thus used must have been circulated privately, showing the eagerness of the people to adopt the new custom. The leaders of the Reformation were quick to recognize the new interest and make use of it in the furtherance of their cause. The first Danish hymnal was published at Malmø in 1528 by Hans Mortensen. It contained ten hymns and a splendid liturgy for the morning service. This small collection proved so popular that it was soon enlarged by the addition of thirty new hymns and appropriate liturgies for the various other services, that were held on the Sabbath day. Independent collections were almost simultaneously published by Hans Tausen, Arvid Petersen and others. And, as these different collections all circulated throughout the country, the result was confusing. At a meeting in Copenhagen of Evangelical leaders from all parts of the country, it was decided to revise the various collections and to combine them into one hymnal. This first common hymnal for the Danish church appeared in 1531, and served as the hymnal of the church till 1544, when it was revised and enlarged by Hans Tausen. Tausen's hymnal was replaced in 1569 by *The Danish Psalmbook*, compiled by Hans Thomisson, a pastor of the

Church of Our Lady at Copenhagen, and the ablest translator and hymnwriter of the Reformation period. **Hans Thomisson's Hymnal**—as it was popularly named—was beyond question the finest hymnal of the transition period. It was exceptionally well printed, contained 268 hymns, set to their appropriate tunes, and served through innumerable reprints as the hymnal of the Danish church for more than 150 years.



Thus the Reformation, in less than fifty years, had produced an acceptable hymnal and had established congregational singing as an indispensable part of the church service. The great upheaval had failed, nevertheless, to produce a single hymnwriter of outstanding merit. The leaders in the movement were able men, striving earnestly to satisfy a pressing need. But they were not poets. Their work consisted of passable translations, selections from Pre-Reformation material and a few original hymns by Claus Mortensen, Arvid Petersen, Hans Thomisson and others. It represented an honest effort, but failed to attain greatness. People loved their new hymns, however, and clung to them despite their halting metres and crude style, even when newer and much finer songs

were available. But when these at last had gained acceptance, the old hymns gradually disappeared, and very few of them are now included in the Danish hymnal. The Reformation produced a worthy hymnal, but none of the great hymnwriters whose splendid work later won Danish hymnody an honorable place in the church.

Hans Chrestensen Sthen, the first notable hymnwriter of the Danish church, was already on the scene, however, when Hans Thomisson's Hymnal left the printers. He is thought to have been born at Roskilde about 1540; but neither the date nor the place of his birth is now known with certainty. He is reported to have been orphaned at an early age, and subsequently, to have been adopted and reared by the renowned Royal Chamberlain, Christopher Walkendorf. After receiving an excellent education, he became rector of a Latin school at Helsingør, the Elsinore of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and later was appointed to a pastorate in the same city. In this latter office he was singularly successful. Lysander, one of his biographers, says of him that he was exceptionally well educated, known as a fine orator and noted as a successful author and translator. His hymns prove that he was also an earnest and warm-hearted Christian. The peoples of Helsingør loved him dearly, and for many years, after he had left their city, continued to "remember him with gifts of love for his long and faithful service among them". In 1583, to the sorrow of his congregation he had accepted a call to Malmø, a city on the eastern shore of the Sound. But in this new field his earnest Evangelical preaching, provoked the resentment of a number of his most influential parishioners, who, motivated by a wish to blacken his name and secure his removal, instigated a suit against him for having mismanaged an inheritance left to his children by his first wife. The children themselves appeared in his defence, however, and expressed their complete satisfaction with his administration of their property; and the trumped up charge was wholly disproved. But his enemies still wanted to have him removed and, choosing a new method of attack, forwarded a petition to the king in which they claimed that "Master Hans Chrestensen Sthen because of weakness and old age was incompetent to discharge his duties as a pastor", and asked for his removal to the parishes of Tygelse and Klagstrup. Though the king is reported to have granted the petition, other things seem to have intervened to prevent its execution, and the ill-used pastor appears to have remained at Malmø until his death, the date of which is unknown.

Sthen's fame as a poet and hymnwriter rests mainly on two

thin volumes of poetry. A Small Handbook, Containing Diverse Prayers and Songs Together with Some Rules for Life, Composed in Verse, which appeared in 1578, and A Small Wander Book, published in 1591. The books contain both a number of translations and some original poems. In some of the latter Sthen readopts the style of the old folk songs with their free metre, native imagery and characteristic refrain. His most successful compositions in this style are his fine morning and evening hymns, one of which is given below.

The gloomy night to morning yields,  
So brightly the day is breaking;  
The sun ascends over hills and fields,  
And birds are with song awaking.  
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,  
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Our grateful thanks to God ascend,  
Whose mercy guarded our slumber.  
May ever His peace our days attend  
And shield us from troubles somber.  
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,  
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Redeem us, Master, from death's strong hand,  
Thy grace from sin us deliver;  
Enlighten us till with Thine we stand,  
And make us Thy servants ever.  
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,  
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Then shall with praise we seek repose  
When day unto night hath yielded,  
And safe in Thine arms our eyelids close  
To rest by Thy mercy shielded.  
Lord, lend us Thy counsel and speed our days,  
The light of Thy grace surround us.

Sthen's hymns all breathe a meek and lowly spirit. They express in the simplest words the faith, hope and fears of a humble, earnest Christian. The following still beloved hymn thus presents a vivid picture of the meek and prayerful spirit of its author.

O Lord, my heart is turning  
To Thee with ceaseless yearning  
And praying for Thy grace.  
Thou art my sole reliance  
Against my foes' defiance;  
Be Thou my stay in every place.

I offer a confession  
Of my severe transgression;  
In me is nothing good.  
But, Lord, Thou wilt not leave me  
And, like the world, deceive me;  
Thou hast redeemed me with Thy blood.

Blest Lord of Life most holy,  
Thou wilt the sinner lowly  
Not leave in sin and death;  
Thine anger wilt not sever  
The child from Thee forever  
That pleads with Thee for life and breath.

O Holy Spirit, guide me!  
With wisdom true provide me;  
Help me my cross to bear.  
Uphold me in my calling  
And, when the night is falling,  
Grant me Thy heavenly home to share.

Most widely known of all Sthen's hymns is his beloved "Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest". In its unabbreviated form this hymn contains eight stanzas of which the initial letters spell the words: "Hans Anno"; and it has become known therefore as "Sthen's Name Hymn". The method of thus affixing one's name to a song was frequently practiced by authors for the purpose of impressing people with their erudition. The meek and anxious spirit that pervades this hymn makes it unlikely, however, that Sthen would have employed his undoubted skill as a poet for such a purpose. The hymn is thought to have been written at Malmö at the time its author encountered his most severe trials there. And its intimate personal note makes it likely that he thus inextricably affixed his name to his hymn in order to indicate its connection with his own faith and experience. "Sthen's Name Hymn" thus should be placed among the numerous great hymns of the church that have been born out of the sorrows and travails of their authors' believing but anxious hearts. The translation given below is from the abbreviated text now used in all Danish hymnals.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
My Savior blest,  
My refuge and salvation,  
I trust in Thee,  
Abide with me,  
Thy word shall be  
My shield and consolation.

I will confide,  
Whate'er betide,  
In Thy compassion tender.  
When grief and stress  
My heart oppress,  
Thou wilt redress  
And constant solace render.

When grief befalls  
And woe appalls  
Thy loving care enfolds me.  
I have no fear  
When Thou art near,  
My Savior dear;  
Thy saving hand upholds me.

Lord, I will be  
Alway with Thee  
Wherever Thou wilt have me.  
Do Thou control  
My heart and soul  
And make me whole;  
Thy grace alone can save me.

Yea, help us, Lord,  
With one accord  
To love and serve Thee solely,  
That henceforth we  
May dwell with Thee  
Most happily  
And see Thy presence holy.

With Sthen the fervid spirit of the Reformation period appears to have spent itself. The following century added nothing to Danish hymnody. Anders Chrestensen Arrebo, Bishop at Tronhjem, and an ardent lover and advocate of a richer cultivation of the Danish language and literature, published a versification of the Psalms of David and a few hymns in 1623. But the Danish church never became a psalm singing church, and his hymns have disappeared. Hans Thomisson's hymnal continued to be printed with occasional additions of new material, most of which possessed no permanent value. But the old hymns entered into the very heart and spirit of the people and held their affection so firmly that even Kingo lost much of his popularity when he attempted to revise them and remove some of their worst poetical and linguistic defects. They were no longer imprinted merely on the pages of a book but in the very heart and affection of a nation.

## Thomas Kingo, the Easter Poet of Denmark

## Kingo's Childhood and Youth

**T**HOMAS KINGO, the first of the great Danish hymnwriters, grew forth as a root out of dry ground. There was nothing in the religious and secular life of the times to foreshadow the appearance of one of the great hymnwriters, not only of Denmark but of the world.

The latter part of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries mark a rather barren period in the religious and cultural life of Denmark. The spiritual ferment of the Reformation had subsided into a staid and uniform Lutheran orthodoxy. Jesper Brochman, a bishop of Sjælland and the most famous theologian of that age, praised king Christian IV for "the zeal with which from the beginning of his reign he had exerted himself to make all his subjects think and talk alike about divine things". That the foremost leader of the church thus should recommend an effort to impose uniformity upon the church by governmental action proves to what extent church life had become stagnant. Nor did such secular culture as there was present a better picture. The Reformation had uprooted much of the cultural life that had grown up during the long period of Catholic supremacy, but had produced no adequate substitute. Even the once refreshing springs of the folk-songs had dried up. Writers were laboriously endeavoring to master the newer and more artistic forms of poetry introduced from other countries, but when the forms had been achieved the spirit had often fled, leaving only an empty shell. Of all that was written during these years only one song of any consequence, "Denmark's Lovely Fields and Meadows", has survived.

Against this bleak background the work of Kingo stands out

as an amazing achievement. Leaping all the impediments of an undeveloped language and an equally undeveloped form, Danish poetry by one miraculous sweep attained a perfection which later ages have scarcely surpassed.

Of this accomplishment, Grundtvig wrote two hundred years later: "Kingo's hymns represent not only the greatest miracle of the 17th century but such an exceptional phenomenon in the realm of poetry that it is explainable only by the fates who in their wis-



Thomas Kingo

dom preserved the seed of an Easter Lily for a thousand years, and then returned it across the sea that it might flower in its original soil". Kingo's family on the paternal side had immigrated to Denmark from that part of Scotland which once had been settled by the poetic Northern sea rovers, and Grundtvig thus conceives the poetic genius of Kingo to be a revival of an ancestral gift, brought about by the return of his family to its original home and a new infusion of pure Northern blood. The conception, like so much that Grundtvig wrote is at least ingenious, and it is recom-

mended by the fact that Kingo's poetry does convey a spirit of robust realism that is far more characteristic of the age of the Vikings than of his own.

Thomas Kingo, the grandfather of the poet, immigrated from Crail, Scotland, to Denmark about 1590, and settled at Helsingør, Sjælland, where he worked as a tapestry weaver. He seems to have attained a position of some prominence, and it is related that King James IV of Scotland, during a visit to Helsingør, lodged at his home. His son, Hans Thomeson Kingo, who was about two years old when the family arrived in Denmark, does not appear to have prospered as well as his father. He learned the trade of linen and damask weaving, and established a modest business of his own at Slangerup, a town in the northern part of Sjælland and close to the famous royal castle of Frederiksborg. At the age of thirty-eight he married a young peasant girl, Karen Sørensdatter, and built a modest but eminently respectable home. In this home, Thomas Kingo, the future hymnwriter, was born December 15, 1634.

It was an unusually cold and unfriendly world that greeted the advent of the coming poet. The winter of his birth was long remembered as one of the hardest ever experienced in Denmark. The country's unsuccessful participation in the Thirty Year's War had brought on a depression that threatened its very existence as a nation; and a terrible pestilence followed by new wars increased and prolonged the general misery, making the years of Kingo's childhood and youth one of the darkest periods in Danish history.

But although these conditions brought sorrow and ruin to thousands, even among the wealthy, the humble home of the Kingos somehow managed to survive. Beneath its roof industry and frugality worked hand in hand with piety and mutual love to brave the storms that wrecked so many and apparently far stronger establishments. Kingo always speaks with the greatest respect and gratitude of his "poor but honest parents". In a poetic description of his childhood years he vividly recalls their indulgent kindness to him.

I took my pilgrim staff in hand  
Ere I attempted talking;  
I had scarce left my swaddling-band  
Before they set me walking.  
They coached me onward with a smile  
And suited me when tearful.  
One step was farther than a mile,  
For I was small and fearful.

But discipline was not forgotten. Parents in those days usually kept the rod close to the apple, often too close. And Kingo's parents, despite their kindness, made no exception to the rule. He was a lively, headstrong boy in need of a firm hand, and the hand was not wanting.

As a child my daily bread  
I with rod and penance had,

he wrote later, adding that the fruits of that chastisement are now sweet to him. Nor do his parents ever appear to have treated him with the cold, almost loveless austerity that so many elders frequently felt it their duty to adopt toward their children. Their discipline was tempered by kindness and an earnest Christian faith. Although Hans Kingo seems to some extent to have been influenced by the strict Presbyterianism of his Scotch forebears, he does not appear, like so many followers of that stern faith, to have taught his children to believe in God as the strict judge rather than as the loving Father of Jesus Christ. In his later years the son at least gives us an attractive picture of his childhood faith:

I gratefully remember  
God's loving care for me  
Since from my nursery chamber  
I toddled fearfully.  
I lived contented in His care  
And trusted in His children's prayer.

These bright years of his happy childhood were somewhat darkened, however, when, at the age of six, he entered the Danish and, two years later, the Latin school of his home town. Nothing could be more unsuited for a child of tender years than the average school of those days. The curriculum was meager, the teaching poor and the discipline cruel. Every day saw its whipping scenes. For a day's unexplained absence the punishment for the smaller boys was three lashes on their bare seats and for the larger an equal number on their bare backs. For graver offences up to twenty lashes might be administered. On entering the Latin school every boy had to adopt a new language. Only Latin could be spoken within its classical confines; and woe be to the tike who so far forgot himself as to speak a word in the native tongue anywhere upon the school premises. The only way anyone, discovered to have perpetrated such a crime, could escape the severest punishment was to report another culprit guilty of the same offense. Under such conditions one cannot wonder that Kingo complains:

The daily round from home to school  
Was often hard and weary.  
It did my youthful ardour cool  
And made my childhood dreary.

At the age of fifteen Kingo, for reasons now unknown, was transferred from the school of his home town to that at the neighboring city of Hillerød. Here, on account of his outstanding ability, he was accepted into the home of his new rector, Albert Bartholin, a young man of distinguished family and conspicuous personal endowments.

Although the school at Hillerød was larger, it probably was not much better than that at Slangerup; but the close association of the humble weaver's son with his distinguished rector and his refined family, no doubt, was a distinct advantage to him. The location of Hillerød on the shores of the idyllic Frederiksborg Lake and close to the magnificent castle of the same name is one of the loveliest in Denmark. The castle had recently been rebuilt, and presented, together with its lovely surroundings, a most entrancing spectacle. Its famous builder, Christian IV, had just gone the way of all flesh; but the new king, Frederik, known for his fondness for royal pomp, frequently resided at the castle together with his court, and thus Kingo must often have enjoyed the opportunity to see both the king and the outstanding men of his government.

It is not unlikely that this near view of the beauty and splendor of his country, the finest that Denmark had to offer, served to awaken in Kingo that ardent love for all things Danish for which he is noticed. While still at Hillerød he, at any rate, commenced a comprehensive study of Danish literature, a most unusual thing for a young student to do at a time when German was the common language of all the upper classes and Danish was despised as the speech of traders and peasants. As neither his school nor the general sentiment of the intellectual classes did anything to encourage interest in native culture, some other influence must have aroused in the young Kingo what one of his early biographers calls "his peculiar inclination for his native tongue and Danish poetry". A few patriotic and forward looking men, it is true, had risen above the general indifference and sought to inspire a greater interest in the use and cultivation of the Danish language; but this work was still very much in its infancy, and it is not likely that the young Kingo knew much about it.

He graduated from Hillerød in the spring of 1654, and enrolled

at the university of Copenhagen on May 6 of the same year. But a terrific outbreak of the plague forced the university to close on May 30, and Kingo returned to his home. The scourge raged for about eight months, carrying away one third of the city's population, and it was winter before Kingo returned to the school and enrolled in the department of theology. The rules of the university required each student, at the beginning of his course, to choose a preceptor, a sort of guardian who should direct his charge in his studies and counsel him in his personal life and conduct. For this very important position Kingo wisely chose one of the most distinguished and respected teachers at the university, Prof. Bartholin, a brother of his former rector. Professor Bartholin was not only a learned man, known for his years of travel and study in foreign parts, but he was also a man of rare personal gifts and sincere piety. In his younger days he had spent four years at the castle of Rosenholm where the godly and scholarly nobleman, Holger Rosenkrans, then gathered groups of young nobles about him for study and meditation. Rosenkrans was a close friend of John Arndt, a leader in the early Pietist movement in Germany, to which the young Bartholin under his influence became deeply attached. Nor had this attachment lessened with the years. And Bartholin's influence upon Kingo was so strong that the latter, when entering upon his own work, lost no time in showing his adherence to the Arndt-Rosenkrans view of Christianity.

Meanwhile he applied himself diligently to his work at the university. Like other disciplines the study of theology at that time was affected by a considerable portion of dry-rust. Orthodoxy ruled the cathedra. With that as a weapon, the student must be trained to meet all the wiles of the devil and perversions of the heretics. Its greatest Danish exponent, Jesper Brochman, had just passed to his reward, but his monumental work, **The System of Danish Theology**, remained after him, and continued to serve as an authoritative textbook for many years to come. Though dry and devoted to hairsplitting as orthodoxy no doubt was, it probably was not quite as lifeless as later generations represent it to have been. Kingo is often named "The Singer of Orthodoxy", yet no one can read his soul-stirring hymns with their profound sense of sin and grace without feeling that he, at least, possessed a deeper knowledge of Christianity than a mere dogmatic training could give him.

Kingo's last months at the university were disturbed by a new war with Sweden that for a while threatened the independent ex-

istence of the country, a threat which was averted only by the ceding of some of its finest provinces. During these stirring events, Kingo had to prepare for his final examinations which he passed with highest honors in the spring of 1658.

Thus with considerable deprivation and sacrifice, the humble weaver's son had attained his membership in the academic world, an unusual accomplishment for a man of his standing in those days. His good parents had reason to be proud of their promising and well educated son who now, after his many years of study, returned to the parental home. His stay there was short, however, for he obtained almost immediate employment as a private tutor, first with the family of Jørgen Sørensen, the overseer at Frederiksborg castle, and later, with the Baroness Lena Rud of Vedby Manor, a position which to an impecunious but ambitious young man like Kingo must have appeared especially desirable. Lena Rud belonged to what at that time was one of the wealthiest and most influential families in the country. Many of her relatives occupied neighboring estates, a circumstance which enabled Kingo to become personally acquainted with a number of them; and with one of them, the worthy Karsten Atke, he soon formed a close and lasting friendship. He also appears to have made a very favorable impression upon his influential patrons and, despite his subordinate position, to have become something of a social leader, especially among the younger members of the group.

Meanwhile the country once again had been plunged into a desperate struggle. The Swedish king, Gustav X, soon repented of the peace he had made when the whole country was apparently at his mercy, and renewed the war in the hope of affixing the Danish crown to his own. This hope vanished in the desperate battle of Copenhagen in 1659, where the Swedish army suffered a decisive defeat by the hand of an aroused citizenry. But detachments of the defeated army still occupied large sections of the country districts where they, like all armies of that day, robbed, pillaged and murdered at will, driving thousands of people away from their homes and forcing them to roam homeless and destitute through the wasted countryside. Acts of robbery and violence belonged to the order of the day. Even Kingo received a bullet through his mouth in a fight with a Swedish dragoon, whom he boldly attempted to stop from stealing one of his employer's horses. When the country finally emerged from the conflict, her resources were depleted, her trade destroyed, and large sections of her country districts laid waste, losses which it required years for her to

regain. But youth must be served. Despite the gravity and hardships of the day, the young people from Vedby managed to have their parties and other youthful diversions. And at these, Kingo soon became a welcome and valued guest. His attractive personality, sprightly humor and distinct social gifts caused his highly placed friends to accept him with delight.

This popularity, if he had cared to exploit it, might have carried him far. In those days the usual road to fame and fortune for an obscure young man was to attach himself to some wealthy patron and acquire a position through him. With the aid of his wealthy friends Kingo could easily enough have obtained employment as a companion to some young noble going abroad for travel and study. It came, therefore, as a surprise to all when he accepted a call as assistant to the Reverend Jacobsen Worm at Kirkehel-singe, a country parish a few miles from Vedby. The position was so far short of what a young man of Kingo's undoubted ability and excellent connections might have obtained, that one may well ask for his motive in accepting it. And although Kingo himself has left no direct explanation of his action, the following verses, which he is thought to have written about this time, may furnish a key.

Wherever in the world I went  
Upon my work or pleasure bent,  
I everywhere my Lord did find,  
He so absorbed my heart and mind  
That I His blessed image traced  
In everything I saw or faced.

My thoughts on heaven ever dwelt,  
For earth I but aversion felt.  
My heart exalted Jesus' name,  
His kingdom was my constant theme;  
My prayer was, by repentance true,  
All carnal passions to subdue.

It is understandable, at least, that a young man with such sentiments should forego the prospect of worldly honor for a chance to serve his Master.

Kingo was ordained in the Church of Our Lady at Copenhagen in September, 1661, and was installed in his new office a few weeks later. The seven years that he spent in the obscure parish were, no doubt, among the most fruitful years of Kingo's life, proving the truth of the old adage that it is better that a man should confer honor on his position than that the position should confer honor upon him. His fiery, forceful eloquence made him

known as an exceptionally able and earnest pastor, and his literary work established his fame as one of the foremost Danish poets of his day.

While still at Vedby, Kingo had written a number of poems which, widely circulated in manuscripts, had gained him a local fame. But he now published a number of new works that attained nation-wide recognition. These latter works compare well with the best poetry of the period and contain passages that still may be read with interest. The style is vigorous, the imagery striking and at times beautiful, but the Danish language was too little cultivated and contemporary taste too uncertain to sustain a work of consistent excellence. Most successful of Kingo's early poems are "Karsten Atke's Farewell to Lion County", a truly felt and finely expressed greeting to his friends, the Atkes, on their departure from their former home, and "Chrysillis", a lovesong, written in a popular French style that was then very much admired in Denmark. Both poems contain parts that are surprisingly fine, and they attained an immense popularity. But although Kingo throughout his life continued to write secular poetry that won him the highest praise, that part of his work is now well nigh forgotten. It is truly interesting to compare the faded beauty of his secular poems with the perennial freshness of his hymns.

It was inevitable that Kingo, with his high ambitions and undoubted ability should desire a larger field of labor. His salary was so small that he had to live in the home of his employer, a circumstance that for various reasons was not always pleasant. Pastor Worm had married thrice and had a large family of children of all ages from a babe in arms to a son at the university. This son, Jacob Worm, was a brilliant but irascible and excessively proud youth only a few years younger than Kingo. From what we know about him in later years, it is likely that Kingo's contact with him during his vacations at home must have proved exceedingly trying. The bitter enmity that later existed between the two men probably had its inception at this time. In 1666, Kingo, therefore, applied for a waiting appointment to his home church at Slangstrup, where the pastor was growing old and, in the course of nature, could be expected ere long to be called to his reward. The application was granted, and when the pastor did die two years later, Kingo at once was installed as his successor.

Slangstrup was only a small city, but it had a new and very beautiful church, which still stands almost unchanged. One may still sit in the same pews and see the same elaborately carved

pulpit and altar which graced its lofty chancel during the pastorate of the great hymnwriter. A beautiful chandelier, which he donated and inscribed, still adorns the arched nave. In this splendid sanctuary it must have been inspiring to listen to the known eloquence of its most famous pastor as he preached the gospel or, with his fine musical voice, chanted the liturgy before the altar. The church was always well attended when Kingo conducted the service. People soon recognized his exceptional ability and showed their appreciation of his devoted ministry. The position of a pastor was then much more prominent than it is now. He was the official head of numerous enterprises, both spiritual and civic, and the social equal of the best people in the community. With many people the custom of calling him "Father" was then by no means an empty phrase. Parishioners sought their pastor and accepted his counsel in numerous affairs that are now considered to be outside of his domain. In view of Kingo's humble antecedents, a position of such prominence might well have proved difficult to maintain among a people that knew his former station. But of such difficulties the record of his pastorate gives no indication. He was, it appears, one exception to the rule that a prophet is not respected in his own country.

When he moved to Slangerup, Kingo was still unmarried. But about two years later he married the widow of his former superior, Pastor Worm, becoming at once the head of a large family consisting of the children of his wife and those of her first husband by his previous marriage. It was a serious responsibility to assume, both morally and financially. The parish was quite large, but his income was considerably reduced by the payment of a pension to the widow of the former pastor and the salary to an assistant. With such a drain on his income and with a large family to support, Kingo's economic circumstances must have been strained. But he was happy with his wife and proved himself a kind and conscientious stepfather to her children who, even after their maturity, maintained a close relationship with him.

Kingo's happiness proved, however, to be but a brief interlude to a period of intense sorrows and disappointments. His wife died less than a year after their marriage; his father, whom he loved and revered, passed away the same year; and the conduct of his stepson, the formerly mentioned Jacob Worm, caused him bitter trouble and humiliation. The bright prospect of this brilliant but erratic youth had quickly faded. After a number of failures, he had been forced to accept a position as rector of the small and insigni-

ficant Latin school at Slangerup, thus coming under the immediate authority of Kingo, who, as pastor, supervised the educational institutions of the parish. Worm always seems to have thought of Kingo as a former assistant to his father, and his position as an inferior to a former superior in his own home, therefore, bitterly wounded his pride. Seeking an outlet for his bitterness, he wrote a number of extremely abusive poems about his stepfather and circulated them among the people of the parish. This unwarranted abuse aroused the anger of Kingo and provoked him to answer in kind. The ensuing battle of vituperation and name-calling brought no honor to either side. Worm's conduct toward his superior, the man who was unselfishly caring for his minor sisters and brothers, deserves nothing but condemnation; but it is painful, nevertheless, to behold the great hymnwriter himself employing the abusive language of his worthless opponent. The times were violent, however, and Kingo possessed his share of their temper. Kingo's last act in this drama between himself and his stepson throws a somewhat softening light upon his conduct. Embittered by persistent failures, Worm continued to pour out his bitterness not only upon his stepfather, but upon other and much higher placed persons until at last he was caught and sentenced to die on the gallows for "having written and circulated grossly defamatory poems about the royal family". In this extremity, he appealed to Kingo, who successfully exerted his then great influence to have the sentence commuted to banishment for life to the Danish colony in India.

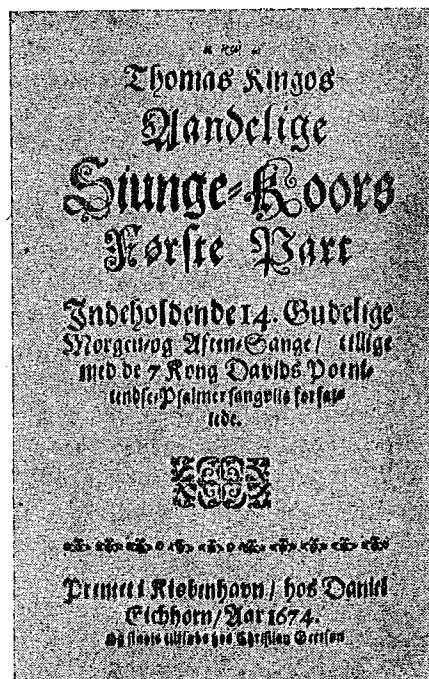
#### *Chapter Four*

## Kingo, the Hymnwriter

KINGO'S FIRST hymns appeared shortly before Christmas, 1673, in a small volume entitled **Spiritual Song-Choir, Part I.** The book contained fifteen morning and evening hymns and seven paraphrases of the psalms. Later editions were enlarged by seven "Morning and Evening Sighs" short hymns that belong to the very best in the collection.

In a foreword addressed to the king, Kingo states that "he has written these hymns with the hope that they might serve to edify his fellow Christians, advance the teaching of the Gospel and bene-

fit the royal household at those daily devotions which it is the duty of every Christian home to practice". He prays, therefore, he continues, that "the king will graciously bestow the same approval upon this work that he has so kindly given to his previous efforts, and thereby encourage him to continue his endeavor until the Danes shall possess a hymnody that they have neither begged nor borrowed from other nations. For the Danish spirit," he concludes,



"is assuredly neither so weak nor so poor that it cannot fly as high toward heaven as that of other peoples without being borne upon strange and foreign wings".

Commenting on the content of the book, Kingo further explains that he expects sensitive readers will discover imperfections in his work which he himself has failed to see, and that it would please him to have such blemishes called to his attention so that they might be corrected in future issues. His choice of tunes will, he fears, provoke criticism. He has set a number of hymns to the melodies of popular songs in order that "those, who for the sake of its tune, now gladly listen to a song of Sodom may, if they be Christians, with the more pleasure use it with a hymn about Zion.

By examining the work of other hymnwriters possible critics might assure themselves, however, that he had in this matter only followed their example." But Kingo need not have apologized for his choice of tunes, for they were on the whole fine and were received without objection.

It would be difficult to overstate the enthusiasm with which Kingo's hymns were received. Within a few years they were printed in numerous editions and translated into several foreign languages. Their enthusiastic reception was well deserved. Viewed against the background of literary mediocrity that characterized the period, Kingo's hymns stand out with amazing perfection. Danish hymnody contained nothing that could compare with them, and other countries, as far as morning and evening hymns were concerned, were in the same position. Paul Gerhardt's fine hymn, "Now Rests Beneath Night's Shadow", which was written twenty years earlier, had been ridiculed into disuse; Ken's famous morning hymn dates from twenty years later; and none of these are as fine as the best of Kingo's.

As might be expected, the hymns are not all of the same merit. Some of them are exceedingly fine; others show the defects of an imperfectly developed language and a deficient literary taste. In the matter of style and form the author had almost nothing to guide him. It is not surprising, therefore, that his work shows crudities which no present day writer would commit, but that it should contain so much that is truly beautiful, even when measured by the standards of today.

Kingo had the true poet's ability to see things poetically. To him the rays of the rising sun were not only shining but "laughing on the roof" of his home. His imagery is rich and skillfully applied. Many of his hymns abound in striking similes. Their outstanding characteristic, however, is a distinctive, forceful realism. Kingo, when he chose to do so, could touch the lyre with enhancing gentleness, but he preferred the strong note and searched always for the most graphic expression, sometimes too graphic, as when he speaks of the "frothing wrath of God" and "the oozy slime of sin". Yet it is this trait of robust reality that invests his hymns with a large part of their enduring merit. "When Kingo sings of God, one feels as though He were right there with him", one of his commentators exclaims. Nor is that realism a mere literary pose. Like most great hymns, his best hymns are reflections of his own experiences. Kingo never attained a state of saintly serenity. Whatever peace he found was gained only through a continuous

struggle with his own fiery and passionate nature. Few hymns convey a more vivid impression of a believing, struggling soul than Kingo's.

His morning hymns are among his best. He loved light and gloried in the birth of each new day. The sun is his favorite symbol. Its rising signifies to him the final triumph of life over death, and the new day is a token thereof. It sounds a joyful call to wake and resume life anew.

"Awake, my soul, the sun is risen,  
Upon my roof its rays now laugh,—"

Every Christian should rejoice in the newborn day and thank God for it:

Break now forth in Jesus' name,  
Blessed morn, in all thy splendor!  
I will sweetest music render  
And thy wondrous gifts proclaim.  
All my spirit with rejoicing  
Thanks the Lord for rest and care  
And, His grace and goodness voicing,  
Wings its way to Him in prayer.

But the commencing day also calls for consecration lest its hours be wasted and its opportunities lost:

Grant me, Lord, that on this day  
Now with light and grace beginning,  
I shall not submit to sinning  
Nor Thy word and way betray.  
Blessed Jesus, hover ever  
Over me, my Sun and Shield,  
That I firm may stand and never  
Unto sin and Satan yield.

And the passing hours must admonish the Christian to work while it is day and to prepare for the evening that is coming:

Let each fleeting hour of grace  
And the chiming bells remind me  
That to earth I must not bind me  
But Thy life and gifts embrace.  
And when dawns my final morrow,  
Let me go to Thee for aye,  
Let my sin and care and sorrow  
With my dust be put away.

Finest of all Kingo's morning hymns is the splendid "The Sun Arises Now in Light and Glory". This hymn presents all the finest

traits of Kingo's poetry, its vivid imagery, forceful style and robust faith. The following translation is by the Rev. P. C. Paulsen.

The sun arises now  
In light and glory  
And gilds the rugged brow  
Of mountains hoary.  
Rejoice, my soul, and lift  
Thy voice in singing  
To God from earth below,  
Thy song with joy aglow  
And praises ringing.

As countless as the sand  
And beyond measure,  
As wide as sea and land  
So is the treasure  
Of grace which God each day  
Anew bestoweth  
And which, like pouring rain,  
Into my soul again  
Each morning floweth.

Preserve my soul today  
From sin and blindness;  
Surround me on my way  
With loving kindness.  
Embue my heart, O Lord,  
With joy from heaven;  
I then shall ask no more  
Than what Thou hast of yore  
In wisdom given.

Thou knowest best my needs,  
My sighs Thou heedest,  
Thy hand Thy children leads,  
Thine own Thou feedest.  
What should I more desire,  
With Thee deciding  
The course that I must take,  
Than follow in the wake  
Where Thou art guiding.

Evening naturally inspires a different sentiment than morning. The rising sun calls for activity, the setting sun for reflection. As the sun sets, as work ceases and the busy day merges into the quiet night the soul begins to take account of its gains and losses, its assets and liabilities. The dying day also conveys a sense of insecurity, of approaching death and the need for pardon and protection. All these sentiments, so different from the hopes and

prospects of the morning, are wonderfully portrayed in Kingo's evening hymns, as for instance:

Vanish now all sinful dreaming,  
Let the joy from heaven streaming  
Occupy my soul and mind.  
Watch, my spirit, and prepare thee,  
Lest the cunning foe ensnare thee  
When repose hath made thee blind.

Sleep now in God's care appeasing.  
While the noise of day is ceasing,  
Lean upon thy Savior's breast.  
He will guard thee through the somber  
Night and make thy final slumber  
Quiet, peaceful, happy, blest.

In the last line with its crescendo of peace and happiness one almost sees the night merge into the final rest.

Among his evening hymns now available in English, the following, perhaps, is the best known.

Softly now the day is ending,  
Night o'er hill and vale descending,  
I will kneel before Thee, Lord.  
Unto Thee my thanks I render  
That Thou didst in mercy tender  
Life and peace to me accord.

May Thy church Thy peace inherit,  
Guide our leaders by Thy spirit,  
Grant our country strength and peace.  
To the straying, sad and dreary,  
To each Christian faint or weary  
Grant Thou solace and surcease.

Keep me, Jesus, while I slumber!  
From my perils without number,  
Shield me, Master, in Thy might,  
That, released from sin and sorrow,  
I may sing this song tomorrow:  
Jesus was my Sun this night.

The publication of these hymns firmly established Kingo's reputation as the foremost poet of his country. Expressions of appreciation poured in upon him from high and low. The king, to whom the hymns were dedicated, so greatly appreciated the gift that, only three years later, he called their otherwise obscure author to become bishop of Fyn, one of the largest and most important dioceses of the country.

Kingo was only forty-two years old when he assumed his new position. His quick elevation from an obscure parish to one of the highest offices within the church might well have strained the abilities of an older and more experienced man. But there can be no doubt that he filled his high position with signal ability. He was both able and earnest, both practical and spiritual. His diocese prospered under his care and his work as a bishop, aside from his renown as a poet, was outstanding enough to give him an enviable reputation in his own generation.

But since his permanent fame and importance rest upon his achievement as a hymnwriter, his appointment as bishop probably must be counted as a loss, both to himself and to the church. His new responsibilities and the multifarious duties of his high office naturally left him less time for other pursuits. He traveled, visited and preached almost continuously throughout his large charge, and it appears like a miracle that under these circumstances, he still found time to write hymns. But in 1684, only two years after his consecration as bishop, he published the second part of **Spiritual Song-Choir**.

This book bears a dedication to the queen, Charlotte Amalia. She was German by birth and a pious, able and distinguished woman in her own right. Kingo praises her especially for her effort to learn and speak the Danish language. In this respect, he declares, "Her Majesty put many to shame who have eaten the king's bread for thirty years without learning to speak thirty words of Danish, because they hold it to be a homespun language, too coarse for their silky tongues".

**Spiritual Song-Choir, Part II** contains twenty hymns and seventeen "sighs", thus outwardly following the arrangement of Part I. But the content is very different. The hymns are songs of penitence, repentance and faith. They show mastery of form, a wealth of imagery, a facility for concentrated expression and a range of sentiment from stark despair to the most confident trust that is, perhaps, unequalled in Danish poetry. It is an embattled soul that speaks through these hymns, a soul that has faced the abyss and clung heroically, but not always successfully, to the pinnacle of faith. One feels that the man who penned the following lines has not merely imagined the nearness of the pit but felt himself standing on the very brink of it.

Mountains of transgressions press  
On my evil burdened shoulders,  
Guilt bestrews my path with boulders,

Sin pollutes both soul and flesh,  
Law and justice are proclaiming  
Judgment on my guilty head,  
Hell's eternal fires are flaming,  
Filling all my soul with dread.

Of an even darker mood is the great hymn: "Sorrow and Unhappiness", with the searching verse:

Is there then no one that cares,  
Is there no redress for sorrow,  
Is there no relief to borrow,  
Is there no response to prayers,  
Is the fount of mercy closing,  
Is the soul to bondage sold,  
Is the Lord my plea opposing,  
Is His heart to sinners cold?

The poet answers his questions in the following stanzas by assuring himself that the Sun of God's grace can and will pierce even his "cloud of despair", and that he must wait therefore in quietness and trust:

O my soul, be quiet then!  
Jesus will redress thy sadness,  
Jesus will restore thy gladness,  
Jesus will thy help remain.  
Jesus is thy solace ever  
And thy hope in life and death;  
Jesus will thee soon deliver;  
Thou must cling to that blest faith.

The uncertainty of life and its fortunes furnished a favored theme for many of his hymns, as for instance in the splendid—

Sorrow and gladness oft journey together,  
Trouble and happiness swift company keep;  
Luck and misfortune change like the weather;  
Sunshine and clouds quickly vary their sweep.

which is, poetically at least, one of his finest compositions. The poet's own career so far had been one of continuous and rather swift advancement. But there was, if not in his own outward fortune, then in the fortunes of other notables of his day, enough to remind him of the inconstancy of worldly honor and glory. Only a few months before the publication of his hymns, Leonora Christine Ulfeldt, the once beautiful, admired and talented daughter

of Christian IV, had been released from twenty-two years of imprisonment in a bare and almost lightless prison-cell; Peder Griffenfeldt, a man who from humble antecedents swiftly had risen to become the most powerful man in the kingdom, had been stripped even more swiftly of all his honors and thrown into a dismal prison on a rocky isle by the coast of Norway; and there were other and well known instances of swift changes in the fortunes of men in those days when they were subject not only to the ordinary vicissitudes of human existence but to the fickle humor of an absolute monarch. It is, therefore, as though Kingo at the height of his own fortune would remind himself of the quickness with which it might vanish, of the evanescence and vanity of all worldly glory. That idea is strikingly emphasized in the following famous hymn:

Vain world, fare thee well!  
I purpose no more in thy bondage to dwell;  
The burdens which thou hast enticed me to bear,  
I cast now aside with their troubles and care.  
I spurn thy allurements, which tempt and appall;  
'Tis vanity all!

What merit and worth  
Hath all that the world puts so temptingly forth!  
It is naught but bubbles and tintured glass,  
Loud clamoring cymbals and shrill sounding brass.  
What are their seductions which lure and enthrall;  
'Tis vanity all!

O honor and gold,  
Vain idols which many with worship behold!  
False are your affluence, your pleasure and fame;  
Your wages are envy, deception and shame,  
Your garlands soon wither, your kingdom shall fall;  
'Tis vanity all!

O carnal desire,  
Thou tempting, consuming and treacherous fire,  
That catches like tinder and scorches like flame,  
Consigning the victim to sorrow and shame,  
Thy honeyest potion is wormwood and gall;  
'Tis vanity all!

Then, fare thee farewell,  
Vain world, with thy tempting and glamorous spell!  
Thy wiles shall no longer my spirit enslave,  
Thy splendor and joy are designed for the grave  
I yearn for the solace from sorrows and harm  
Of Abraham's arm!

There shall all my years  
 I bloom like the lily when summer appears;  
 There day is not ruled by the course of the sun  
 Nor night by the silvery light of the moon;  
 Lord Jesus shall shine as my sun every day  
 In heaven for aye.

This is an eloquent farewell, clothed in all the expressive wealth of language and imagery of which Kingo was such a master. One cannot repress the feeling, however, that it presents a challenge rather than a farewell. A man that so passionately avows his repudiation of the world must have felt its attraction, its power to tempt and enthrall. He fights against it; the spirit contends with the flesh, but the fight is not easy. And it is in part this very human trait in Kingo that endears his song to us. What Christian does not recognize some of his own experiences in the following characteristic song:

Ever trouble walks beside me, \*)  
 Ever God with grace provides me,  
 Ever have I fear and grief,  
 Ever Jesus brings relief.

Ever sin my heart accuses,  
 Ever Jesus help induces,  
 Ever am I weighed with care,  
 Ever full of praise and prayer.

So is joy by grief attended,  
 Fortune with misfortune blended;  
 Blessings mixed with grief and strife  
 Is the measure of my life.

But, O Jesus, I am crying:  
 Help that faith, on Thee relying,  
 Over sin and grief alway  
 Shall prevail and gain the day.

Some statements in this hymn have frequently been criticized as contradictory, for how can one be "always" full of care and "always" full of praise and prayer? The terms cancel each other. But are not such contradictions expressive of life itself? Few—if any—are wholly one thing or wholly another. People are complex. Their joys struggle with their sorrows, their most earnest faith with their doubts and fears. It brings Kingo nearer to us to know that he shared that struggle. His songs have appealed to

\*) Another translation:  
 "Ever is a peril near me" by C. Doving in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

millions because they are both so spiritual and so human. How expressive of human need and Christian trust are not the following brief lines:

Lord, though I may  
 The whole long day  
 Find no relief from sorrow,  
 Yea, should the night  
 Afford no light  
 To ease my plight—  
 Thou comest on the morrow.

## Chapter Five

# Kingo's Psalmbook

**A**FTER THE publication of *Spiritual Song-Choir II*, Kingo stood at the very height of his fame. His hymns were sung everywhere, and nobles and commoners vied with each other in chanting his praises. But a much more difficult task now awaited him—that of preparing a new hymnal.

Hans Thomisson's hymnal had become antiquated after serving the church for nearly one hundred and twenty-five years. It had served its purpose well. Its hymns had been sung by high and low until they had entered into the thoughts and conscience of all. A changing language and a fast developing literary taste long ago had shown their need for revision; but the people so far had opposed all attempts to change their beloved old songs. Their defects by now had become so conspicuous, however, that even the more conservative admitted the desirability of at least a limited revision. And the only man for the undertaking of such a task was, of course, Kingo.

In March, 1683, King Christian V, therefore, commissioned Thomas Kingo to prepare and publish a new church hymnal for the kingdom of Denmark and Norway. The carefully prepared instructions of his commission directed him to eliminate undesirable hymns; to revise antiquated rhymes and expressions; to adopt at least two new hymns by himself or another for every pericope and epistle of the church year, but under no circumstances to make any changes in Luther's hymns that would alter their meaning.

Kingo would undoubtedly have saved himself a great deal of

disappointment if he had conscientiously followed his instructions. But the draft of the first half of the hymnal, which was sent to the king six years later, showed that, intentionally or otherwise, he had ignored them almost completely. The draft contained 267 hymns of which 137 were his own and the remainder those of various authors, both old and new. Though Kingo might reasonably have been criticized for adopting such a proportionally large number of his own compositions, it was not, however, his selection of new hymns but his treatment of the old hymns that provoked the greatest opposition. For he had not contented himself with merely revising the latter but in many instances had rewritten them so completely that they were unrecognizable. And it mattered not that the new texts were on the whole much finer than the old, for people were not yet ready to relinquish these. The opposition grew so strong that the king, though he had already approved the proposed hymnal, a few weeks later revoked not only his approval but Kingo's commission.

This summary action came as an almost stunning blow to Kingo, affecting seriously both his pride and his finances. On the strength of the king's approval, he had already bought a printing press, acquired large quantities of material and printed a large edition of the book. And these investments, which represented a large part of his private fortune, were now apparently lost. It helped but little that the king, in order to salve the wound he had inflicted upon one of his most distinguished subjects, elevated him to the nobility, for the hurt was too deep to be healed by a mere gesture.

One cannot deny, however, that the monarch had serious reason for his action. Not only had Kingo violated his instructions but he had planned a book that hardly could have proved satisfactory. It would have been both too large and too expensive for common use. He himself, on the other hand, had reason to complain that he had not been consulted before the work, on which he had spent so much of his time and substance, was summarily rejected. No doubt the king had acted with unseemly haste and lack of consideration.

The work was now held in abeyance for a few years. But the need for a new hymnal was too pressing to be permanently ignored. The king, therefore, appointed Søren Jonasson, a provost at the cathedral of Roskilde, to undertake the work. Jonasson was known as an excellent translator of German hymns, and the choice appeared reasonable. He worked fast and in less than two years was able to present a draft of his work. This contained a well balan-

ced selection of the old hymns and about twenty new hymns by himself and various German authors, but not a single hymn by Kingo. The omission no doubt reflects the envy that the poet's quick rise to fame had stirred up against him in certain influential circles. His enemies, however, had overshot their mark. Even the king realized that it would be impossible at this time to publish a hymnal that ignored the work of the country's greatest hymnwriter. And so Jonasson's work promptly shared the fate of his predecessor's.

The troublesome problem now rested again for a few years until it was revived by the zealous efforts of the king's chaplain, Peter Jespersen, a close friend of the Norwegian hymnwriter, Peter Dass and himself a native of the northern country.

A committee was appointed to prepare and publish a new hymnal "that should give due recognition" to the work of Kingo. Although it was not specifically directed to do so, the committee proved its good will toward the harshly treated poet by entering into correspondence with him and asking him to forward the material he already possessed, and to write the additional hymns that might be needed to complete the hymnal. With this request Kingo gladly complied, hoping that thus after all the greater part of his work would be put to use. In this, however, he was disappointed. When the hymnal finally appeared it contained 297 hymns of which only 85 were by Kingo. This represented, it is true, a great change from Jonasson's proposal, but when it is remembered that the first half of the work, proposed by himself, contained 136 of his own hymns, and that he had written an additional number by the request of the committee, it will be seen that even now less than half of his hymns found a place in the hymnal.

Aside from this deplorable loss, it must be conceded that the committee had done an excellent work and that its hymnal was much better suited for general use than Kingo's proposed hymnal would have been. The committee also had shown its fairness toward Kingo by commissioning him to print the hymnal and to enjoy exclusive rights of its distribution for ten years, so that he might recoup some of the losses he had sustained by the rejection of his own book. He repaid the favor by turning out a most excellent piece of work; and the book, both in content and appearance undoubtedly rated as the finest hymnal the Danish church had so far produced. It served the church for more than a hundred years, and was always known as "Kingo's Hymnal", for, after all, his great hymns were what gave it permanent value.

## Kingo's Church Hymns

KINGO'S church hymns naturally differ from his spiritual songs. They are more objective in form and less fiery in spirit. Most of them follow their themes quite closely, reproducing in many instances even the words of their text. Kingo is too vital, however, to confine himself wholly to an objective presentation. Usually the last stanzas of his hymns are devoted to a brief and often striking application of their text. He possessed to a singular degree the ability to express a thought tersely, as for instance in the following stanza, the last of a hymn on the baptism of the Lord:

Our Lord is then our brother  
In whom we may confide,  
The Church of God our mother,  
The Holy Ghost our guide;  
Our blest baptismal dower  
The bands of hell has riven  
And opened us God's heaven,  
This is our faith each hour.

The hymns may be classed under four headings: Festival Hymns, Sacramental Hymns, Historical Hymns and Hymns on the Gospels and Epistles.

With the exception of his Easter anthem, his festival hymns cannot compare with those of later authors. Some of his Pentecost hymns, such as the hymns given below, are, however, still favorites.

The day of Pentecost draws nigh;  
Come, Holy Spirit from on high,  
Who with the Father and the Son  
Is God eternal, three in one.

O God triune, Thy grace impart  
Into my carnal, sinful heart,  
That it a temple blest may be  
Prepared and set aside for Thee.

Come, Holy Ghost, and witness bear  
That I the life of Christ do share,  
And that I know no other name  
To save my soul from guilt and shame.

O Counselor of truth and light,  
Teach me to know my Lord aright,  
That from the way of afith I may  
Not even for a moment stray.

Blest Spirit of my God and Lord,  
Preserve me in Thy way and word,  
Imbue me with Thy life and breath,  
Console me in the hour of death.

Kingo frequently is referred to as "the Easter Singer of Denmark". His claim to this title rests mainly on one song. Easter with its story of triumphant victory appealed especially to him; and he wrote several excellent hymns on the theme, but they are all overshadowed by the splendid anthem presented below.

Like the golden sun ascending  
In the darkly clouded sky  
And on earth its glory spending  
Until clouds and darkness fly,  
So my Jesus from the grave,  
From death's dark, abysmal cave,  
Rose triumphant Easter morning,  
Brighter than the sun returning.

Thanks, O thanks, to Thee arisen  
Lord and God Immanuel,  
That the foe could not imprison  
Thee within his hell-dark cell.  
Thanks that Thou didst meet our foe  
And his kingdom overthrow.  
Jubilant my spirit raises  
New Thy never ending praises.

Sin and death and every arrow  
Satan hence may point at me  
Fall now broken at the narrow  
Tomb that saw Thy victory;  
There Thou didst them all destroy  
Giving me the cup of joy  
That Thou glorious resurrection  
Wrought my pardon and protection.

Thou wilt hence to life awake me  
By Thy resurrection power;  
Death may wound and overtake me,  
Worms my flesh and bones devour,  
But I face the threat of death  
With the sure and joyful faith  
That its fearful reign was ended  
When Thy might its portal rended.

Blessed Jesus, let the Spirit  
 So imbue my heart with grace  
 That I walk by Thy blest merit  
 And no more the way retrace  
 To the vile and miry pit  
 Where I lay condemned, unfit,  
 Till redeemed to life victorious  
 By Thy resurrection glorious.

In this rugged hymn Kingo is at his best—fiery, vital, a master of imagery and graphic expression.

His hymns on the sacraments faithfully reflect the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. Here he most clearly shows his ability to present objective truths in a devotional spirit. We meet in these a Christian who humbly and prayerfully accepts the whole mystery of God. For centuries these rugged songs have served to express the sentiments of millions as they met at the baptismal font or knelt before the altar. The following is one of the most favored baptismal hymns both in the Danish and Norwegian churches:

Whoso believes and is baptized \*)  
 God's kingdom shall inherit,  
 For he is cleansed by Jesus Christ  
 Who, by His grace and merit,  
 Adopts him as His child and heir,  
 Grants him in heaven's bliss to share  
 And seals him with His Spirit.

We ask with earnest faith of Thee,  
 Our Lord and blest Defender,  
 That Thou wilt guide us constantly  
 And, in Thy mercy tender,  
 Keep us in our baptismal grace  
 Until at last we take our place  
 With Thee 'midst heaven's splendor.

Kingo's communion hymns have to a large extent been superseded by later hymns of Grundtvig and others. But some of them are still in common use. The following characteristic hymn is frequently used before the communion.

Lord Jesus Christ receive me now  
 As with a heart contrite I bow  
 Before Thine altar, blessed Lamb,  
 Who bore my sorrow, sin and shame.

I am today my Saviour's guest.  
 Bethink, my soul, the honor blest,

That He, Thy Lord, will sup with thee  
 And will Himself Thy nurture be.

He offers to thee with the bread  
 His body riven for thy aid,  
 And with the wine His precious blood,  
 The price of thy eternal good.

How this can be, I cannot tell;  
 He did not on the mystery dwell;  
 No mind the secret can perceive,  
 It is enough that I believe.

Rejoice, then, O my soul today  
 That God's appointed servant may  
 Now offer thee the gift so free  
 Through which thy Lord unites with thee.

O Lord, I offer Thee my soul  
 To nourish, strengthen and make whole.  
 Uphold me by Thy means of grace  
 Until I see Thee face to face.

The short hymn given below is a favorite after the communion in numerous Danish and Norwegian churches.

O dearest Lord, receive from me  
 The heartfelt thanks I offer Thee,  
 Who through Thy body and Thy blood  
 Hast wrought my soul's eternal good.

Break forth, my soul, in joy and praise;  
 What wealth is mine this day of days!  
 My Jesus dwells within my soul;  
 Let every tongue His grace extol.

Kingo's historical hymns, that is, his hymns on the stories of the Gospels, usually are not counted among the best. Yet there are many fine hymns among them, such as the annunciation hymn, "There Came a Message from the Sky"; the hymn about the wedding at Cana, "How Blessed Was that Wedding Feast"; and the splendid hymn on the transfiguration of the Lord, "I Lift My Eyes and Spirit Up unto the Hallowed Mountain Top Where Jesus Once Ascended". Best known among this group of hymns is, however, his great sequence of songs on our Lord's passion. In these inspired hymns we meet again the Kingo that we know from his spiritual songs, fiery, eloquent, imaginative, seeking to picture every detail and mood of the Savior's suffering from the garden to the cross. Though it is difficult to choose among hymns so universally fine, the one given below is, at least, fairly representative of the group.

\*) Another translation: "He that believes and is baptized" by G. T. Rygh in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

Over Kedron Jesus passes  
 Ready for His passion day,  
 While the Prince of Darkness masses  
 All his legions for the fray.  
 Wily foes with evil hearts  
 Bend their bows and point their darts,  
 Aiming at the Savior solely,  
 As the world forsakes Him wholly.

David once in great affliction  
 Crossed the Kedron's narrow stream,  
 While his foes without restriction  
 Hatched their vile and cunning scheme.  
 Darker far the shadows now  
 Bend about the Savior's brow  
 As He hastens to His passion  
 For the sinful world's salvation.

See Him, torn by woe appalling,  
 Kneeling in the garden still,  
 And upon His Father calling  
 That, if possible, He will  
 Take the bitter cup away.  
 But how meekly He doth pray!  
 What the Father shall Him offer,  
 He obediently will suffer.

See, what agony assails Him  
 In that dark and fearful hour;  
 Every friend deserts or fails Him;  
 Satan strikes with all his power;  
 And the flowers beneath Him grow  
 Crimson with the purple flow  
 From His anguished frame distilling  
 As His cup of woe is filling.

But, O flower, whose tender blossom  
 Caught that precious, purple dew  
 From the Saviour's riven bosom,  
 In a blessed hour you grew!  
 Eden's flowers did not bear  
 Fruits that could with yours compare:  
 By the blood your petals staining,  
 I am now salvation gaining.

When I like the flower must wither,  
 When I wilt and fade like grass,  
 When the hour of death draws hither,  
 When I from this world shall pass,  
 When my heart has ceased to beat  
 When I face God's judgment seat,  
 Then His blood, which stained the garden,  
 Shall procure my lasting pardon.

Kingo's hymns on the pericopes have proved less resistant to time than most of his other work. They are in reality brief commentaries, presenting a practical rather than a poetical exposition and application of their texts. But even so, the singular freshness of their thought and style has preserved many of them until our day. The following hymn on Matthew 8, 23-27, the stilling of the storm, furnishes a characteristic example of this group of hymns.

What vessel is that passing  
 Across the boundless deep,  
 On which the billows massing  
 In foaming fury sweep?  
 She seems in sore distress  
 As though she soon would founder  
 Upon the shoals around her  
 And sink without redress.

It is the storm-tossed vessel  
 Of God's own church on earth,  
 With which the world doth wrestle,  
 And send its fury forth,  
 While Jesus oft appears  
 As though He still were sleeping,  
 With His disciples weeping  
 And crying out in fears.

But let the world with fury  
 Against the church but rave,  
 And spend its might to bury  
 Her in the roaring wave!  
 It only takes a word  
 To hush the wild commotion  
 And show the mighty ocean  
 Her Lord is still aboard.

Kingo is often called the singer of orthodoxy. His hymns faithfully present the accepted doctrines of his church. No hymnwriter is more staunchly Lutheran than he. But he was too vital to become a mere doctrinaire. With him orthodoxy was only a means to an end, a more vigorous Christian life. Many of his hymns present a forceful and straightforward appeal for a real personal life with God. The following hymn may be called an orthodox revival hymn. It was a favorite with the great Norwegian lay preacher, Hans Nielsen Hauge.

The power of sin no longer  
 Within my heart shall reign;  
 Faith must grow ever stronger  
 And carnal lust be slain;  
 For when I was baptized,

The bonds of sin were severed  
And I by grace delivered  
To live for Jesus Christ.

Would I accept the merit  
Of my baptismal grace  
And with my faith and spirit  
The Savior's cross embrace,  
How great would be my blame  
Should I abide in evil  
And not renounce the devil  
In Christ my Savior's name.

It can bestow no treasure  
On me that Christ arose.  
If I will not with pleasure  
The power of death oppose,  
And with my heart embrace  
The Savior, who is risen  
And has from error's prison  
Redeemed me by His grace.

Lord Jesus, help me ever  
To fight "the old man" so  
That he shall not deliver  
Me to eternal woe,  
But that I here may die  
From sin and all offences  
And, by the blood that cleanses,  
Attain my home on high.

Thus, the permanent value of Kingo's hymns rests not only on their rugged and expressive poetry but on the earnest and warm-hearted Christian spirit that breathes through them. In the perennial freshness of this spirit succeeding generations have experienced their kinship with the poet and found expression for their own hope and faith. The following ageless prayer expresses not only the spirit of the poet but that of earnest Christians everywhere and of every age.

Print Thine image pure and holy \*)  
On my heart, O Lord of Grace;  
So that nothing high nor lowly  
Thy blest likeness can efface.  
Let the clear inscription be:  
Jesus, crucified for me,  
And the Lord of all creation,  
Is my refuge and salvation.

\*) Another translation: "On my heart imprint thine image" by P. O. Stromme in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

## Kingo's Later Years

KINGO'S WORK with the hymnal had brought him much disappointment and some loss of popularity. He felt not without justification that he had been ill treated. He did not sulk in his tent, however, but pursued his work with unabated zeal. His diocese was large, comprising not only Fyn but a large number of smaller islands besides. The work of making periodical visits to all parishes within such a far-flung charge was, considering the then available means of transportation, not only strenuous but hazardous. Roads were bad and vessels weak and slow. Hardships and danger beset his almost continuous voyages and journeys. A number of poems relating the adventures of the traveler are reminiscences of his own experiences.

But his work of visiting the churches constituted, of course, only a part of his duties. He had to preach in the cathedral at Odense at least every Wednesday in Lent and on all festival Sundays; examine the work and conduct of all pastors within the diocese; act as an arbiter in disputes between them and their parishioners; make sure that the financial affairs of the church and its institutions were honestly conducted; attend to the collection of church taxes; and superintend all schools, hospitals and institutions of charity. The efficient accomplishment of all these tasks might well test the strength and ability of any man.

His manifold duties also engendered numerous occasions for friction, especially with the civil authorities, whose rights and duties often overlapped his own. And he did not escape the danger of such bickerings with their resultant ill-feeling. There is nothing to indicate that he was contentious by nature. But he was no doubt zealous in defending the prerogatives of his office. His temper was quick and somewhat martial. "One could very well," one of his biographers declares, "envision him as a knight in full armor leading a troop in the charge." With the exception of his active enemies, most of his contemporaries agree, however, that he was commonly more than patient in his dealings with others.

Kingo was an able administrator, and the institutions and finances of the diocese prospered under his care. But it was as an earnest Christian and a tireless worker for the spiritual improvement of his people that he won their respect. He was known as an "eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures." One of his contemporaries said of him: "Were we not forced after hearing him preach to say with the disciples, 'Did not our hearts burn within us when he opened the Scriptures to us and, like a son of thunder, published the sins of the house of Jacob, or, like Barnabas, the son of comfort, bound up our wounds and comforted us with the comfort with which he had himself been so richly comforted by God.'" The few extracts of his sermons that have come down to us verify the truth of this statement. They show us a man firmly grounded in his own faith and zealous in impressing its truth upon others. His preaching was strictly orthodox and yet fiery and practical. The poetical language and forceful eloquence of his sermons remind one of the best of his spiritual songs.

Kingo's writings and frequent travels brought him into contact with most of the outstanding personages of his country in his day. His charming personality, lively conversation and fine sense of humor made him a welcome guest wherever he appeared. On the island of Taasinge, he was a frequent and beloved guest in the stately castle of the famous, pious and revered admiral, Niels Juul, and his equally beloved wife, Birgitte Ulfeldt. His friendship with this worthy couple was intimate and lasting. When admiral Juul died, Kingo wrote the beautiful epitaph that still adorns his tomb in the Holmen church at Copenhagen. On the island of Falster he often visited the proud and domineering ex-queen, Carolina Amalia. He was likewise a frequent visitor at the neighboring estate of the once beautiful and adored daughter of king Christian IV, Leonora Ulfeldt, whom the pride and hatred of the ex-queen had consigned for twenty-two years to a dark and lonely prison cell. Years of suffering, as we learn from her still famous book *Memories of Misery*, had made the princess a deeply religious woman. Imprisonment had aged her body, but had neither dulled her brilliant mind nor hardened her heart. She spent her remaining years in doing good, and she was a great admirer of Kingo.

Thus duty and inclination alike brought him in contact with people of very different stations and conditions in life. His position and high personal endowments made him a notable figure wherever he went. But he had his enemies and detractors as well as

his friends. It was not everyone who could see why a poor weaver's son should be raised to such a high position. Kingo was accused of being greedy, vain, over-ambitious and self-seeking, all of which probably contained at least a grain of truth. We should have missed some of his greatest hymns, if he had been a saint, and not a man of flesh and blood, of passionate feelings and desires, a man who knew from his own experiences that without Christ he could do nothing.

Despite certain peculiar complications, Kingo's private life was quite happy. Four years after the death of his first wife, he entered into marriage with Johanne Lund, a widow many years older than he. She brought with her a daughter from her former marriage. And Kingo thus had the exceptional experience of being stepfather to three sets of children, the daughter of his second wife and the children and stepchildren of his first. To be the head of such a family must inevitably have presented confusing problems to a man who had no children of his own. But with the exception of his stepson, all the children appear to have loved him and maintained their relation to him as long as he lived.

His second wife died in 1694, when she was seventy-six and he sixty years old. During the later years of her life she had been a helpless invalid, demanding a great deal of patience and care of her busy husband. Contemporaries comment on the frequent sight of the famous bishop good-humoredly carrying his wife about like a helpless child. Less than a year after her death, Kingo entered into a new marriage, this time with an attractive young lady of the nobility, Birgitte Balslev, his junior by more than thirty years. This new marriage provoked a great deal of gossip and many predictions of disaster on account of the great disparity in years of the contracting parties. But the predictions proved wholly unfounded, and the marriage singularly happy. Kingo and Birgitte, a contemporary tells us, were "inseparable as heart and soul." She was an accomplished and highly intelligent woman, and Kingo found in her, perhaps for the first time in his life, a woman with whom he could share fully the rich treasure of his own heart and mind. He is credited with the remark that he had done what all ought to do: married an elderly woman in his young days, whom he could care for when she grew old, and a young woman in his later years, who could comfort him in his old age.

But Kingo did not show the effect of his years. He was still as energetic and vigorous as ever in the prosecution of his manifold

duties. For a number of years after his marriage, he even continued his strenuous visits to all parts of his see, now always accompanied by his wife. His leisure hours were usually spent on a beautiful estate a few miles from Odense, which belonged to his wife. At this favored retreat and in the company of friends, he still could relax and become the liveliest of them all.

The years, however, would not be denied. At the turn of the century, he suffered a first attack of the illness, a bladder complaint, that later laid him in his grave. He made light of it and refused to ease his strenuous activity. But the attack returned with increasing frequency and, on a visit to Copenhagen in the fall of 1702, he was compelled to take to his bed. He recovered somewhat and was able to return home. But it was now clear to all that the days of the great bishop were numbered. Early in the new year he became bedfast and suffered excruciatingly at times. "But he submitted himself wholly to God's will and bore his terrible suffering with true Christian patience," one of his biographers tells us. To those who asked about his condition, his invariable answer was, that all was well with him. If anyone expressed sympathy with him, he usually smiled and said that "it could not be expected that the two old friends, soul and body, should part from each other without pain." When someone prayed or sang for him he followed him eagerly, expressing his interest with his eyes, hands and whole being.

A week before his death he called the members of his family to his bed, shared the Holy Communion with them and thanked them and especially his wife, for their great kindness to him during his illness. On October 13, a Saturday, he slept throughout the day, but awoke in the evening and exclaimed: "Lord God, tomorrow we shall hear wonderful music!" And on the morning of October 14, 1703, just as the great bells of the cathedral of St. Knud called people to the service, his soul departed peacefully to join the Church above. God had heard at last the earnest prayer of his own great hymns:

But, O Jesus, I am crying:  
Help that faith, on Thee relying,  
Over sin and sorrow may  
Ever rise and win the day.

His body was laid to rest in a small village church a few miles outside of Odense. There one still may see the stone of his tomb,

bearing an inscription that likens him to a sun which, although it has set, still lights the way for all true lovers of virtue. Other monuments to his memory have been raised at Slangerup, Odense and other places. But his finest and most lasting memorials are his own great hymns. In these his warm, passionate spirit still speaks to a larger audience than he ever reached in his own day. The years have served only to emphasize the truth of Grundtvig's beautiful epitaph to him on his monument at Odense:

Thomas Kingo is the psalmist  
Of the Danish temple choir.  
This his people will remember  
Long as song their hearts inspire.

Hans Adolph Brorson,  
the Christmas Singer of Denmark

## Brorson's Childhood and Youth

HANS ADOLPH Brorson came from Schleswig, the border province between Denmark and Germany which for centuries has constituted a battleground between the two countries and cost the Danes so much in blood and tears. His family was old in the district and presented an unbroken line of substantial farmers until his grandfather, Broder Pedersen, broke it by studying for the ministry and becoming pastor at Randrup, a small country parish on the west coast of the province.

Broder Pedersen remained at Randrup till his death in 1646, and was then succeeded by his son, Broder Brodersen, a young man only twenty-three years old, who shortly before his installation had married Catherine Margaret Clausen, a daughter of the manager of Trojborg manor, the estate to which the church at Randrup belonged. Catherine Clausen bore her husband three sons, Nicolaj Brodersen, born July 23, 1690, Broder Brodersen, born September 12, 1692, and Hans Adolph Brodersen—or Brorson—as his name was later written—born June 20, 1694.

Broder Brodersen was a quiet, serious-minded man, anxious to give his boys the best possible training for life. Although his income was small, he managed somehow to provide private tutors for them. Both he and his wife were earnest Christians, and the fine example of their own lives was no doubt of greater value to their boys than the formal instruction they received from hired teachers. Thus an early biographer of the Brorsons writes: "Their good parents earnestly instructed their boys in all that was good, but especially in the fear and knowledge of God. Knowing that a good example is more productive of good than the best precept, they were not content with merely teaching them what is good, but strove earnestly to live so that their own daily lives might present a worthy pattern for their sons to follow."

Broder Brodersen was not granted the privilege of seeing his sons attain their honored manhood. He died in 1704, when the

eldest of them was fourteen and the youngest only ten years old. Upon realizing that he must leave them, he is said to have comforted himself with the words of Kingo:

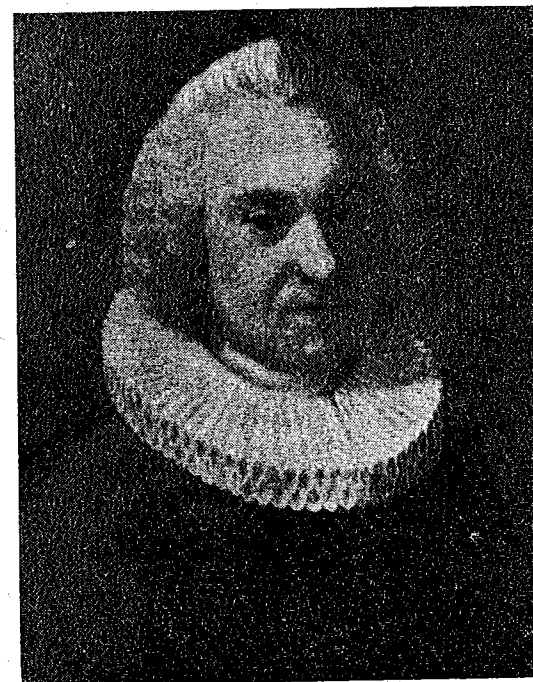
If for my children I  
Would weep and sorrow  
And every moment cry:  
Who shall tomorrow  
With needful counsel, home and care provide them?  
The Lord still reigns above,  
He will with changeless love  
Sustain and guide them.

Nor was the faith of the dying pastor put to shame. A year after his death, his widow married his successor in the pastorate, Pastor Ole Holbeck, who proved himself a most excellent stepfather to his adopted sons.

Reverend Holbeck personally taught the boys until Nicolaj, and a year later, Broder and Hans Adolph were prepared to enter the Latin school at Ribe. This old and once famous school was then in a state of decay. The town itself had declined from a proud city, a favored residence of kings and nobles, to an insignificant village of about fifteen hundred inhabitants. Of its former glory only a few old buildings and, especially, the beautiful cathedral still remained. And the Latin school had shared the fate of the city. Its once fine buildings were decaying; its faculty, which in former times included some of the best known savants of the country, was poorly paid and poorly equipped; and the number of its students had shrunk from about 1200 to less than a score. Only the course of study remained unchanged from the Middle Ages. Latin and religion were still the main subjects of instruction. It mattered little if the student could neither speak nor write Danish correctly, but he must be able to define the finest points in a Latin grammar of more than 1200 pages. Attendance at religious services was compulsory; but the services were cold and spiritless, offering little attraction to an adolescent youth.

The boys completed their course at Ribe and entered the university of Copenhagen, Nicolaj in the fall of 1710 and the younger brothers a year later. But the change offered them little improvement. The whole country suffered from a severe spiritual decline. Signs of an awakening were here and there, but not at the university where Lutheran orthodoxy still maintained its undisputed reign of more than a hundred years, though it had now become more dry and spiritless than ever.

The brothers all intended to prepare for the ministry. But after two years Nicolaj for various reasons left the University of Copenhagen to complete his course at the University of Kiel. Broder remained at Copenhagen, completing his course there in the spring of 1715. Hans Adolph studied for three years more and, even then, failed to complete his course.



Hans Adolph Brorson

It was a period of transition and spiritual unrest. The spiritual revival now clearly discernible throughout the country had at last reached the university. For the first time in many years the prevailing orthodoxy with its settled answers to every question of faith and conduct was meeting an effective challenge. Many turned definitely away from religion, seeking in other fields such as history, philosophy and especially the natural sciences for a more adequate answer to their problems than religion appeared to offer. Others searched for a solution of their difficulty in new approaches to the old faith. The result was a spiritual confusion such as often precedes the dawn of a new awakening. And Brorson ap-

pears to have been caught in it. His failure to complete his course was by no means caused by indolence. He had, on the contrary, broadened his studies to include a number of subjects foreign to his course, and he had worked so hard that he had seriously impaired his health. But he had lost his direction, and also, for the time being, all interest in theology.

It was, therefore, as a somewhat spiritually confused and physically broken young man that he gave up his studies and returned to his home at Randrup. His brothers were already well started upon their conspicuously successful careers, while he was still drifting, confused and uncertain, a failure, as some no doubt would call him. His good stepfather, nevertheless, received him with the utmost kindness. If he harbored any disappointment in him, he does not appear to have shown it. His stepson remained with him for about a year, assisting him with whatever he could, and had then so far recovered that he was able to accept a position as tutor in the family of his maternal uncle, Nicolaj Clausen, at Løgum Kloster.

Løgum Kloster had once been a large and powerful institution and a center of great historic events. The magnificent building of the cloister itself had been turned into a county courthouse, at which Nicolaj Clausen served as county president, but the splendid old church of the cloister still remained, serving as the parish church. In these interesting surroundings and in the quiet family circle of his uncle, Brorson made further progress toward normal health. But his full recovery came only after a sincere spiritual awakening in 1720.

The strong revival movement that was sweeping the country and displacing the old orthodoxy, was engendered by the German Pietist movement, entering Denmark through Slesvig. The two conceptions of Christianity differed, it has been said, only in their emphasis. Orthodoxy emphasized doctrine and Pietism, life. Both conceptions were one-sided. If orthodoxy had resulted in a lifeless formalism, Pietism soon lost its effectiveness in a sentimental subjectivism. Its neglect of sound doctrine eventually gave birth to Rationalism. But for the moment Pietism appeared to supply what orthodoxy lacked: an urgent call to Christians to live what they professed to believe.

A number of the early leaders of the movement in Denmark lived in the neighborhood of Løgum Kloster, and were personally known to Brorson. But whether or not any of these leaders was in-

strumental in his awakening is now unknown. One of his contemporaries simply states that Brorson at this time sought to employ his solitude in a closer walk with God in Christ and, in so doing, received a perfect assurance of the Lord's faithfulness to those that trust in Him." Thus whatever influence neighboring Pietists may have contributed to the great change in his life, the change itself seems to have been brought about through his own Jacob-like struggle with God. And it was a complete change. If he had formerly been troubled by many things, he henceforth evinced but one desire to know Christ and to be known by Him.

A first fruit of his awakening was an eager desire to enter the ministry. He was offered a position as rector of a Latin school, but his stepfather's death, just as he was considering the offer, caused him to refuse the appointment and instead to apply for the pastorate at Randrup. His application granted, he at once hastened back to the university to finish his formerly uncompleted course and obtain his degree. Having accomplished this in the fall of the same year, on April 6, 1722, he was ordained to the ministry together with his brother, Broder Brorson, who had resigned a position as rector of a Latin school to become pastor at Mjolden, a parish adjoining Randrup. As his brother, Nicolaj Brorson, shortly before had accepted the pastorate of another adjoining parish, the three brothers thus enjoyed the unusual privilege of living and working together in the same neighborhood.

The eight years that Brorson spent at Randrup where his father and grandfather had worked before him were probably the happiest in his life. The parish is located in a low, treeless plain bordering the North Sea. Its climate, except for a few months of summer, is raw and blustery. In stormy weather the sea frequently floods its lower fields, causing severe losses in crops, stocks and even in human life. Thus Brorson's stepfather died from a cold caught during a flight from a flood that threatened the parsonage. The severe climate and constant threat of the sea, however, fosters a hardy race. From this region the Jutes together with their neighbors, the Angles and Saxons, once set out to conquer and settle the British Isles. And the hardihood of the old sea-rovers was not wholly lost in their descendants when Brorson settled among them, although it had long been directed into other and more peaceful channels.

The parsonage in which the Brorsons lived stood on a low ridge, rising gently above its surroundings and affording a splendid

view over far reaches of fields, meadows and the ever changing sea. The view was especially beautiful in early summer when wild flowers carpeted the meadows in a profusion of colors, countless birds soared and sang above the meadows and shoals of fish played in the reed bordered streams. It was without doubt this scene that inspired the splendid hymn "Arise, All Things that God Hath Made."

Brorson was happy to return to Randrup. The parish was just then the center of all that was dearest to him in this world. His beloved mother still lived there, his brothers were close neighbors, and he brought with him his young wife, Cathrine Clausen, whom he had married a few days before his installation.

Nicolaj and Broder Brorson had, like him, joined the Pietist movement, and the three brothers, therefore, could work together in complete harmony for the spiritual revival of their parishes. And they did not spare themselves. Both separately and cooperatively, they labored zealously to increase church attendance, revive family devotions, encourage Bible reading and hymn singing, and minimize the many wordly and doubtful amusements that, then as now, caused many Christians to fall. They also began to hold private assemblies in the homes, a work for which they were bitterly condemned by many and severely reprimanded by the authorities. It could not be expected, of course, that a work so devoted to the furtherance of a new conception of the Christian life would be tolerated without opposition. But their work, nevertheless, was blest with abundant fruit, both in their own parishes and throughout neighboring districts. Churches were refilled with worshippers, family altars rebuilt, and a new song was born in thousands of homes. People expressed their love for the three brothers by naming them "The Rare Three-Leafed Clover from Randrup." It is said that the revival inspired by the Brorsons even now, more than two hundred years later, is plainly evident in the spiritual life of the district.

Thus the years passed fruitfully for the young pastor at Randrup. He rejoiced in his home, his work and the warm devotion of his people. It came, therefore, as a signal disappointment to all that he was the first to break the happy circle by accepting a call as assistant pastor at Christ church in Tønder, a small city a few miles south of Randrup.

## The Singer of Pietism

THE CITY of Tønder, when Brorson located there, had about two thousand inhabitants. At one time it had belonged to the German Dukes of Gottorp, and it was still largely German speaking. Its splendid church had three pastors, two of whom preached in German and the third, Brorson, in Danish.

The parish Pastor, Johan Herman Schraeder, was an outstanding and highly respected man. Born at Hamburg in 1684, he had in his younger days served as a tutor for the children of King Frederick IV, Princess Charlotte Amalia and Prince Christian, now reigning as King Christian VI.

Pastor Schraeder was a zealous Pietist and a leader of the Pietist movement in Tønder and its neighboring territory. Like the Brorsons he sought to encourage family devotions, Bible reading and, especially, hymn singing. People are said to have become so interested in the latter that they brought their hymnals with them to work so that they might sing from them during lunch hours. He himself was a noted hymnwriter and hymn collector, who, shortly after Brorson became his assistant, published a German hymnal, containing no less than 1157 hymns.

Schraeder, we are told, had been personally active in inducing Brorson to leave his beloved Randrup and accept the call to Tønder. As Brorson was known as an ardent Pietist, Schraeder's interest in bringing him to Tønder may have originated in a natural wish to secure a congenial co-worker, but it may also have sprung from an acquaintance with his work as a hymnwriter. For although there is no direct evidence that any of Brorson's hymns were written at Randrup, a number of circumstances make it highly probable that some of them were composed there and that Schraeder was acquainted with them. Such a mutual interest also helps to explain why Brorson should leave his fruitful work at Randrup for an inferior position in a new field. It is certain that the change brought him no outward advantages, and his position as a Danish pastor in a largely German speaking community must have presented certain unavoidable difficulties.

Although Brorson to our knowledge took no part in the endless contest between German and Danish, his personal preference was, no doubt, for the latter. It is thus significant that, although he must have been about equally familiar with both languages, he did not write a single hymn in German. He showed no ill will toward his German speaking compatriots, however, and worked harmoniously with his German speaking co-workers. But this strongly German atmosphere does constitute a peculiar setting for one of the greatest hymnwriters of the Danish church.

The congregation at Tønder had formed the peculiar custom of singing in German—even at the Danish service. It is self-evident, however, that such a custom could not be satisfactory to Brorson. He was a Pietist with the fervent longing of that movement for a real spiritual communion with his fellow Christians. But a custom that compelled the pastor and his congregation to speak in different tongues was, of necessity, a hindrance to the consummation of such a desire. And now Christmas was drawing near, that joyful season which Brorson, as his hymns prove, loved so well and must heartily have desired to share with his hearers, a desire which this mixture of tongues to a certain extent, made impossible. He and his congregation had to be one in language before they could wholly be one in spirit.

And so, shortly before the great festival in 1732, he published a small and unpretentious booklet entitled: **Some Christmas Hymns, Composed to the Honor of God, the Edification of Christian Souls and, in Particular, of My Beloved Congregation during the Approaching Joyful Christmastide, Humbly and Hastily Written by Hans Adolph Brorson.**

This simple appearing booklet at once places Brorson among the great hymnwriters of the Christian church. It contains ten hymns, seven of which are for the Christmas season. Nearly every one of them is now counted among the classics of Danish hymnody.

Brorson seems at once to have reached the height of his ability as a hymnwriter. His Christmas hymns present an intensity of sentiment, a mastery of form and a perfection of poetical skill that he rarely attained in his later work. They are frankly lyrical. Unlike his great English contemporary, Isaac Watts, who held that a hymn should not be a lyrical poem and deliberately reduced the poetical quality of his work, Brorson believed that a Christian should use "all his thought and skill to magnify the grace of God". The opinion of an English literary critic "that hymns cannot be

considered as poetry" is disproved by Brorson's work. Some of his hymns contain poetry of the highest merit. Their phrasing is in parts extremely lyrical, utilizing to the fullest extent the softness and flexibility that is supposed to be an outstanding characteristic of the Danish tongue; their metres are most skillfully blended and their rhymes exceedingly varied. His masterly use of what was often considered an inconsequential appendage to poetry is extraordinarily skillful. Thus he frequently chooses a harsh or a soft rhyme to emphasize the predominating sentiment of his verse.

Brorson is without doubt the most lyrical of all Danish hymnwriters. Literary critics have rated some of his hymns with the finest lyrics in the Danish language. Yet his poetry seldom degenerates to a mere form. His fervid lyrical style usually serves as an admirable vehicle for the warm religious sentiment of his song.

In their warm spirit and fervid style Brorson's hymns in some ways strikingly resemble the work of his great English contemporaries, the Wesleys. Nor is this similarity a mere chance. The Wesleys, as we know, were strongly influenced first by the Moravians and later by the German Pietists. Besides a number of Moravian hymns, John Wesley also translated several hymns from the hymnbook compiled by the well-known Pietist, Johan Freylinghausen. The fervid style and varied metres of these hymns introduced a new type of church song into the English and American churches. But Freylinghausen's *Gesang-Buch* also formed the basis of the hymnal compiled by Johan Herman Schraeder from which Brorson chose most of the originals of his translations. Thus both he and the Wesleys in a measure drew their inspiration from the same source. The Danish poet and his English contemporaries worked independently and mediated their inspiration in their own way, but the resemblance of their work is unmistakable. In poetical merit, however, the work of Brorson far excels that of the Wesleys. But his Christmas hymns also surpass most earlier Danish hymns and even the greater part of his own later work.

One's first impression of the booklet that so greatly has enriched the Christmas festival of Denmark and Norway, is likely to be disappointing. At the time of Brorson the festival was frequently desecrated by a ceaseless round of worldly amusements. People attended the festival services of the church and spent the remainder of the season in a whirl of secular and far from innocent pleasures. With his Pietistic views Brorson naturally deplored

such a misuse of the season. And his first hymn, therefore, sounds an earnest call to cease these unseemly pleasures and to use the festival in a Christian way.

Cast out all worldly pleasure  
This blessed Christmastide,  
And seek the boundless treasure  
That Jesus doth provide.

But although such a warning may have been timely, then as now, it hardly expresses the real Christmas spirit. In the next hymn, however, he at once strikes the true festival note in one of the most triumphant Christmas anthems in the Danish or any other language.

This blessed Christmastide we will,  
With heart and mind rejoicing,  
Employ our every thought and skill,  
God's grace and honor voicing.  
In Him that in the manger lay  
We will with all our might today  
Exult in heart and spirit,  
And hail Him as our Lord and King  
Till earth's remotest bounds shall ring  
With praises of His merit.

A little Child of Jesse's stem,  
And Son of God in heaven,  
To earth from heaven's glory came  
And was for sinners given.  
It so distressed His loving heart  
To see the world from God depart  
And in transgression languish,  
That He forsook His home above  
And came to earth in tender love  
To bear our grief and anguish.

Therefore we hymn His praises here  
And though we are but lowly,  
Our loud hosannas everywhere  
Shall voice His mercy holy.  
The tent of God is now with man,  
And He will dwell with us again  
When in His name assembling.  
And we shall shout His name anew  
Till hell itself must listen to  
Our Christmas song with trembling.

And though our song of joy be fraught  
With strains of lamentation,  
The burden of our cross shall not

Subdue our jubilation,  
For when the heart is most distressed,  
The harp of joy is tuned so best  
Its chords of joy are ringing,  
And broken hearts best comprehend  
The boundless joy our Lord and Friend  
This Christmas day is bringing.

Hallelujah, our strife is o'er!  
Who would henceforth with sadness  
Repine and weep in sorrow sore  
This blessed day of gladness.  
Rejoice, rejoice, ye saints on earth,  
And sing the wonders of His birth  
Whose glory none can measure.  
Hallelujah, the Lord is mine,  
And I am now by grace divine  
The heir of all His treasure!

Equally fine but more quietly contemplative is the next hymn in the collection which takes us right to the focal point of Christmas worship, the stable at Bethlehem.

My heart remains in wonder  
Before that lowly bed  
Within the stable yonder  
Where Christ, my Lord, was laid.  
My faith finds there its treasure,  
My soul its pure delight,  
Its joy beyond all measure,  
The Lord of Christmas night.

But Oh! my heart is riven  
With grief and sore dismay  
To see the Lord of heaven  
Must rest on straw and hay,  
That He whom angels offer  
Their worship and acclaim  
From sinful man must suffer  
Such scorn, neglect and shame.

Why should not castles royal  
Before Him open stand,  
And kings, as servants loyal,  
Obey His least command?  
Why came He not in splendor  
Arrayed in robes of light  
And called the world to render  
Its homage to His might?

The sparrow finds a gable  
Where it may build its nest,  
The oxen know a stable  
For shelter, food and rest;  
Must then my Lord and Savior  
A homeless stranger be,  
Denied the simplest favor  
His lowly creatures see.

O come, my Lord, I pray Thee,  
And be my honored guest.  
I will in love array Thee  
A home within my breast.  
It cannot be a stranger  
To Thee, who made it free.  
Thou shalt find there a manger  
Warmed by my love to Thee.

Far different from this song of quiet contemplation is the searching hymn that follows it.

How do we exalt the Father  
That He sent His Son to earth.  
Many with indifference gather  
At His gift of boundless worth.

This is followed by another hymn of praise.

Lift up your voice once more  
The Savior to adore.  
Let all unite in spirit  
And praise the grace and merit  
Of Jesus Christ, the Holy,  
Our joy and glory solely.

And then comes "The Fairest of Roses", which a distinguished critic calls "one of the most perfect lyrics in the Danish language". This hymn is inspired by a text from the Song of Songs "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley". It is written as an allegory, a somewhat subdued form of expression that in this case serves admirably to convey an impression of restrained fire. Its style is reminiscent of the folk songs, with the first stanza introducing the general theme of the song, the appearance of the rose, that is, of the Savior in a lost and indifferent world. The remainder of the verses are naturally divided into three parts: a description of the dying world in which God causes the rose to appear, a lament over the world's indifference to the gift which it should have received with joy and gratitude, and a glowing declaration of what the rose means to the poet himself.

Many chapters have been written about the poetic excellencies of this hymn, such as the perfect balance of its parts, the admirable treatment of the contrast between the rose and the thorns, and the skillful choice of rhymes to underscore the predominating sentiment of each verse. But some of these excellencies have no doubt been lost in the translation and can be appreciated only by a study of the original. English translations of the hymn have been made by German-, Swedish-, and Norwegian-American writers, indicating its wide popularity. The following is but another attempt to produce a more adequate rendering of this beautiful song.

Now found is the fairest of roses,  
Midst briars it sweetly reposes.  
My Jesus, unsullied and holy,  
Abode among sinners most lowly.

Since man his Creator deserted,  
And wholly His image perverted,  
The world like a desert was lying,  
And all in transgressions were dying.

But God, as His promises granted,  
A rose in the desert hath planted,  
Which now with its sweetness endoweth  
The race that in sinfulness groweth.

All people should now with sweet savor  
Give praise unto God for His favor;  
But many have ne'er comprehended  
The rose to the world hath descended.

Ye sinners as vile in behavior  
As thorns in the crown of the Savior,  
Why are ye so prideful in spirit,  
Content with your self-righteous merit?

O seek ye the places more lowly,  
And weep before Jesus, the Holy,  
Then come ye His likeness the nearest;  
The rose in the valley grows fairest.

My Jesus, Thou ever remainest  
My wonderful rose who sustainest  
My heart in the fullness of pleasure;  
Thy sweetness alone I will treasure.

The world may of all things bereave me,  
Its thorns may assail and aggrrieve me,  
The foe may great anguish engender:  
My rose I will never surrender.

The last Christmas hymn of the collection is printed under the heading: "A Little Hymn for the Children", and is composed from the text "Have ye not read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise". Said to be the oldest children's hymn in Danish, it is still one of the finest. It is written as a processional. The children come hastening on to Bethlehem to find the new-born Lord and offer Him their homage. One almost hears their pattering feet and happy voices as they rush forward singing:

Here come Thy little ones, O Lord,  
To Thee in Bethlehem adored.  
Enlighten now our heart and mind  
That we the way to Thee may find.

We hasten with a song to greet  
And kneel before Thee at Thy feet.  
O blessed hour, O sacred night,  
When Thou wert born, our soul's Delight!

Be welcome from Thy heavenly home  
Unto this vale of tears and gloom,  
Where man to Thee no honor gave  
But stable, manger, cross and grave.

But Jesus, oh! how can it be  
That but so few will think of Thee  
And of that tender, wondrous love  
Which drew Thee to us from above?

O draw us little children near  
To Thee, our Friend and Brother dear,  
That each of us so heartily  
In faith and love may cling to Thee.

Let not the world lead us astray  
That we our Christian faith betray,  
But grant that all our longings be  
Directed always unto Thee.

Then shall the happy day once come  
When we shall gather in Thy home  
And join the angels' joyful throng  
In praising Thee with triumph song.

We gather now about Thee close  
Like leaves around the budding rose,  
O grant us, Savior, that we may  
Thus cluster round Thy throne for aye.

His Christmas hymns were so well received that Brorson was encouraged to continue his writing. During the following year he published no less than five collections bearing the titles: **Some Advent Hymns, Some Passion Hymns, Some Easter Hymns, Some Pentecost Hymns, and Hymns for the Minor Festivals.** All of these hymns were likewise kindly received and therefore he continued to send out new collections, publishing during the following years a whole series of hymns on various phases of Christian faith and life. In 1739, all these hymns were collected into one volume and published under the title: **The Rare Clenod of Faith.**

This now famous book contains in all 67 original and 216 translated hymns. The arrangement of the hymns follows in the main the order of the Lutheran catechism, covering not only every division but almost every subdivision of the book. Brorson, it appears, must have written his hymns after a preconceived plan, a rather unusual method for a hymnwriter to follow.

**The Rare Clenod of Faith** fails as a whole to maintain the high standard of the Christmas hymns. Although the language, as in all that Brorson wrote, is pure and melodious, the poetic flight and fresh sentiment of his earlier work is lacking to some extent in the latter part of the collection. One reason for this is thought to be that Brorson, on locating at Tønder, had come into closer contact with the more extreme views of Pietism. The imprint of that movement, at least, is more distinct upon his later than upon his earlier work. The great preponderance of his translated over his original hymns also affects the spirit of the collection. He was not always fortunate in the selection of the original material for his translations. Some of these express the excessive Pietistic contemplation of the Savior's blood and wounds; others are rhymed sermons rather than songs of praise.

Despite these defects, **The Rare Clenod of Faith**, still ranks with the great books of hymnody. It contains a wealth of hymns that will never die. Even the less successful of its compositions present a true Evangelical message, a message that, at times, sounds a stern call to awake and "shake off that sinful sleep before to you is closed the open door" and, at others, pleads softly for a closer walk with God, a deeper understanding of His ways and a firmer trust in His grace. There are many strings on Brorson's harp, but they all sound a note of vital faith.

Judging Brorson's original hymns to be far superior to his translations, some have deplored that he should have spent so

much of his time in transferring the work of others. And it is, no doubt, true that his original hymns are as a whole superior to his translations. But many of these are so fine that their elimination would now appear like an irreplaceable loss to Danish hymnody. The constant love with which many of them have been used for more than two hundred years should silence the claim that a translated hymn must of necessity be less valuable than an original. A considerable number of the originals of Brorson's most favored translations have long been forgotten.

As a translator Brorson is usually quite faithful to the originals, following them as closely as the differences in language and mode of expression permit. He is not slavishly bound, however, to his text. His constant aim is to reproduce his text in a pure and idiomatic Danish. And as his own poetic skill in most cases was superior to that of the original writer, his translations are often greatly superior to their originals in poetical merit.

Although the translation of a translation of necessity presents a very unreliable yard-stick of a man's work, the following translation of Brorson's version of the well-known German hymn, "Ich Will Dich Lieben, Meine Starke" may at least indicate the nature of his work as a translator.

Thee will I love, my strength, my Treasure;  
My heart in Thee finds peace and joy.  
Thee will I love in fullest measure,  
And in Thy cause my life employ.  
Thee will I love and serve alone.  
Lord, take me as Thine own.

Thee will I love, my Life Eternal,  
My Guide and Shepherd on Life's way.  
Thou leadest me to pastures vernal,  
And to the light of endless day.  
Thee will I love, Whose blood was spilt  
To cleanse my soul from guilt.

Long, long wert Thou to me a stranger,  
Though Thou didst love me first of all,  
I strayed afar in sin and danger  
And heeded not Thy loving call  
Until I found that peace of heart  
Thou canst alone impart.

Lord, cast not out Thy child, returning  
A wanderer, naked and forlorn.  
The tempting world, I sought with yearning,

Had naught to give but grief and scorn.  
In Thee alone for all its grief  
My heart now finds relief.

Thee will I love and worship ever,  
My Lord, my God and Brother dear!  
Must every earthly tie I sever  
And naught but sorrow suffer here,  
Thee will I love, my Lord divine;  
O Jesus, call me Thine.

Equally characteristic of his work is his translation of the less-known but appealing German hymn "Der Schmale Weg Ist Breit Genug zum Leben".

The narrow way is wide enough to heaven  
For those who walk straight-forward and with care  
And take each step with watchfulness and prayer.  
When we are by the Spirit driven,  
The narrow way is wide enough to heaven.

The way of God is full of grace and beauty  
For those who unto Him in faith have turned  
And have His way with love and ardor learned.  
When we accept His call and duty,  
The way of God is full of grace and beauty.

The yoke of God is not too hard to carry  
For those who love His blessed will and way  
And shall their carnal pride in meekness slay.  
When we with Him in faith will tarry,  
The yoke of God is not too hard to carry.

O Jesus, help me Thy blest way to follow.  
Thou knowest best my weak and fainting heart  
And must not let me from Thy way depart.  
I shall Thy name with praises hallow,  
If Thou wilt help me Thy blest way to follow.

But fine as many of his translations are, Brorson's main claim to fame must rest, of course, upon his original compositions. These are of varying merit. His Christmas hymns were followed by a number of hymns for the festivals of the church year. While some of these are excellent, others are merely rhymed meditations upon the meaning of the season and lack the freshness of his Christmas anthems. The triumphant Easter hymn given below belongs to the finest of the group.

Christians, who with sorrow  
On this Easter morrow  
Watch the Savior's tomb,

Banish all your sadness,  
On this day of gladness  
Joy must vanquish gloom.  
Christ this hour  
With mighty power  
Crushed the foe who would detain Him;  
Nothing could restrain Him.

Rise, ye feeble-hearted,  
Who have pined and smarted,  
Vexed by sin and dread.  
He has burst the prison  
And with might arisen,  
Jesus, Who was dead.  
And His bride  
For whom He died,  
He from sin and death now raises;  
Hail Him then with praises.

When our sins aggrrieve us,  
Jesus will receive us,  
All our debt He paid.  
We, who were transgressors  
Are now blest possessors  
Of His grace and aid.  
When in death  
He gave His breath  
To the cruel foe He yielded  
That we should be shielded.

Earth! where are thy wonders!  
Hell! where are thy thunders!  
Death, where is thy sting!  
Jesus rose victorious,  
Reigns in heaven glorious  
As our Lord and King.  
Him, the Lord,  
Who did accord  
Us so great a joy and favor,  
We will praise forever.

Brorson's other hymns are too numerous to permit a more than cursory review. Beginning with the subject of creation, he wrote a number of excellent hymns on the work and providence of God. Best known among these is the hymn given below, which is said to have so pleased the king that he chose its author to become bishop. The hymn is thought to have been written while Brorson was still at Randrup. But whether this be so or not, it is evidently inspired by the natural scenery of that locality.

Arise, all things that God hath made \*)  
And praise His name and glory;  
Great is the least His hand arrayed,  
And tells a wondrous story.

Would all the kings of earth display  
Their utmost pomp and power,  
They could not make a leaflet stay  
And grow upon a flower.

How could the wisdom I compass  
To show the grace and wonder  
Of but the smallest blade of grass  
On which the mind would ponder.

What shall I say when I admire  
The verdant meadows blooming,  
And listen to the joyful choir  
Of birds above them zooming.

What shall I say when I descry  
Deep in the restless ocean  
The myriad creatures passing by  
In swift and ceaseless motion.

What shall I say when I behold  
The stars in countless numbers  
Display their light and charm untold  
While nature sweetly slumbers.

What shall I say when I ascend  
To Him Who made creation,  
And see the angel host attend  
His throne with adoration.

What shall I say—vain are my words  
And humble my opinion!  
Great is Thy wisdom, Lord of lords,  
Thy glory and dominion!

Lift us your voice with one accord  
Now, every tribe and nation:  
Hallelujah, great is our Lord  
And wondrous His creation!

The Pietist movement is known for its fervid glorification of the Savior, and particularly of His blood and wounds, a glorification which at times appears objectionable because of the too-familiar and realistic terms in which it is expressed. Brorson did not wholly escape the excesses of the movement in this respect,

\*) Another translation with the same first line by A. M. Andersen in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

especially in his translations. In his original hymns the excesses are less apparent. However faithful he might be to the movement he possessed a wholesome restraint which, when he was not following others, caused him to moderate its most inappropriate extravagances. What can be more reverent than this beautiful tribute to the Savior:

Jesus, name of wondrous grace,  
Fount of mercy and salvation,  
First fruit of the new creation,  
Weary sinners' resting place,  
Banner of the faith victorious  
Anchor of our hope and love,  
Guide us in Thy footsteps glorious,  
Bear us to Thy home above.

Or more expressive than this jubilant hymn of adoration:

O Thou blest Immanuel!  
What exceeding joy from heaven  
Hast Thou caused in me to dwell  
By Thy life for sinners given.  
Thou hast broke the bands at last  
Which my yearning soul held fast.

In Thine arms I find relief,  
Soon Thy home I shall inherit,  
Sin and sorrow, death and grief  
Nevermore shall vex my spirit.  
For Thy word confirms the pledge  
Of my lasting heritage.

Lord, my praise ascends to Thee  
For these days of joy and sorrow;  
They shall end in jubilee  
On that blest eternal morrow  
When the Sun of Paradise  
Shall for me in splendor rise.

Rise in joyful faith, my soul!  
Banish all thy grief and sadness.  
Strong the stream of life shall roll  
Through my heart with constant gladness.  
Jesus, Who mine anguish bore,  
Be now praised for evermore.

Most beautiful is also his hymn to the Lamb of God, translated by Pastor D. G. M. Bach.

I see Thee stand, O Lamb of God,  
On Zion's mountain peak.  
But Oh the way that Thou hast trod,  
So long, so hard, so bleak!  
What Thou didst suffer for our woe,  
No man can ever know.

Though Brorson made a number of excellent translations of hymns to the Spirit such as the beautiful, "Come, Rains from the Heavens, to Strengthen and Nourish the Languishing Field," he wrote no outstanding Pentecost hymns of his own composition. It remained for Grundtvig to supply the Danish church with a wealth of unexcelled hymns on the Holy Ghost.

Aside from his Christmas hymns, Brorson's greatest contribution to hymnody is perhaps his revival hymns, a type in which the Lutheran church is rather poor. The special message of the Pietist movement was an earnest call to awake, and Brorson repeated that call with an appealing insistence and earnestness. The word of God has been sown, but where are its fruits?

O Father, may Thy word prevail  
Against the power of Hell!  
Behold the vineyard Thou hast tilled  
With thorns and thistles filled.  
'Tis true, the plants are there,  
But ah, how weak and rare,  
How slight the power and evidence  
Of word and sacraments.

It is, therefore, time for all Christians to awake.

Awaken from your idle dreaming!  
Ye lukewarm Christians, now arise.  
Behold, the light from heaven streaming  
Proclaims the day of mercy flies.  
Throw off that sinful sleep before  
To you is closed the open door.

Many are heedless, taking no thought of the day when all shall appear before the judgment of God. Such people should arouse themselves and prepare for the rendering of their account.

O heart, prepare to give account  
Of all thy sore transgression.  
To God, of grace and love the Fount,  
Make thou a full confession.  
What hast thou done these many years

The Lord hath thee afforded,  
Nothing but sin and earthly cares  
Is in God's book recorded.

He realizes that many continue in their sin because of ignorance,  
and with these he pleads so softly:

If thou but knew the life that thou are leading  
In sin and shame is Satan's tyranny,  
Thou wouldest kneel and with the Lord be pleading  
That He thy soul from bondage would set free.  
Oh, how the Saviour would rejoice  
If thou today should'st listen to His voice!

And the day of salvation is now at hand.

O, seek the Lord today,  
Today He hath salvation.  
Approach Him while He may  
Still hear thy supplication.  
Repent and seek His grace  
While yet His call doth sound,  
Yea turn to Him thy face  
While still He may be found.

Orthodoxy had instilled a formal but often spiritless faith.  
Pietism aimed to awaken the great mass of formal believers to a  
new life, a living and active faith. This is strongly expressed in  
the very popular hymn below.

The faith that Christ embraces \*)  
And purifies the hearts  
The faith that boldly faces  
The devil's fiery darts,  
That faith is strong and must  
Withstand the world's temptation  
And in all tribulation,  
In Christ, the Saviour, trust.

The faith that knows no struggle  
Against the power of sin,  
The faith that sounds no bugle  
To waken, fight and win,  
That faith is dead and vain,  
Its sacred name disgracing,  
And impotent when facing  
The devil's mighty reign.

\*) Another translation: "The faith that God believeth" by P. C. Paulsen in  
"Hymnal for Church and Home".

A Christian wears his armor  
To wage the war of faith  
Against the crafty charmer,  
His foe in life and death.  
With Jesus he must stand  
Undaunted and victorious,  
If he would win his glorious  
Reward at God's right hand.

It is a comfort pleasing  
In our embattled life,  
To feel our strength increasing  
In trying days of strife.  
And as our days shall be  
The Lord will help accord us  
And with His gifts reward us  
When striving faithfully.

O Lord, my hope most fervent,  
My refuge in all woe,  
I will hence be Thy servant  
Through all my days below.  
Let come whatever may,  
I will exalt Thee ever,  
And ask no other favor  
Than live with Thee for aye.

Although Brorson knew that—

The cost is greater than at first expected  
To be in God's unbounded gifts perfected.

he holds that

It does not cost too hard a strife  
To be a Christian, pure and heaven-minded,—

But a Christian must be steadfast and persevering, as he ad-  
monishes himself and others in the following very popular hymn.  
The translation is by Pastor P. C. Paulsen.

Stand fast, my soul, stand fast  
In Christ, thy Saviour!  
Lose not the war at last  
By faint behaviour.  
It is of no avail  
That thou hast known Him  
If when thy foes assail,  
Thou shalt His banner fail,  
And thus disown Him.  
To brandish high thy sword,  
With calm assurance,  
And face the devil's horde

With brave endurance,  
Is meet and well begun,  
And merits praising.  
But from the strife to run,  
When blows thy courage stun,  
Is most disgracing.

Let Satan rave and rage  
By hosts attended,  
The war for Christ I wage  
Until it's ended.  
When leaning on His arm  
With firm reliance,  
I need not take alarm,  
To me can come no harm  
From Hell's defiance.

When Jesus' love I see,  
It me constraineth,  
So that from carnal glee  
My soul abstaineth.  
When heaven to me is dear,  
Its joys attractive,  
Of hell I have no fear,  
For Christ, my Lord, is near,  
In battle active.

In just a little while  
The strife is ended,  
And I from Satan's guile  
For aye defended.  
Then I, where all is well,  
In heaven's glory,  
Among the saints shall dwell,  
And with rejoicing tell  
Salvation's story.

Therefore children of God should rejoice.

Children of God, born again by His Spirit,  
Never ye cease in His name to rejoice;  
Jesus believing and saved by His merit,  
Come we to Him with a jubilant voice.

But even a child of God must not expect to escape from the common trials and perils of life. God promises assistance but not exemption to those who love Him. In the following striking hymn, Brorson vividly pictures both the trials and the comfort of a child of God.

I walk in danger everywhere,\*)  
The thought must never leave me,

\*) Another translation: "I walk in danger all the way" by D. G. Ristad in "Hymnal for Church and Home".

That Satan watches to ensnare  
And with his guile deceive me.  
His cunning pitfalls may  
Make me an easy prey  
Unless I guard myself with care;  
I walk in danger everywhere.

I walk through trials everywhere;  
The world no help can offer.  
The burdens I am called to bear  
I must with patience suffer;  
Though often I discern  
No place where I may turn  
When clouds surround me far and near;  
Death walks beside me everywhere.

Death walks besides me everywhere;  
Its shadows oft appall me.  
I know not when the hour is here  
When God from earth shall call me.  
A moment's failing breath,  
And I am cold in death,  
Faced with eternity fore'er;  
Death walks besides me everywhere.

I walk 'mongst angels everywhere;  
They are my sure defenders;  
The hordes of hell in vain prepare  
Against such strong contenders.  
All doubts and fears must flee,  
With angels guarding me;  
No foe can harm me in their care;  
I walk 'mongst angels everywhere.

I walk with Jesus everywhere;  
His goodness never fails me.  
I rest beneath His shielding care  
When trouble sore assails me.  
And by His footsteps led,  
My path I safely tread.  
Despite all ills my foes prepare:  
I walk with Jesus everywhere.

I walk to heaven everywhere,  
Preparing for the morrow  
When God shall hear my anxious prayer  
And banish all my sorrow.  
Be quiet then, my soul,  
Press onward to thy goal.  
All carnal pleasures thou forswear,  
And walk to heaven everywhere.

Unlike Kingo and Grundtvig, Brorson wrote no outstanding hymns on the sacraments. Pietism was in the main a revival movement and placed no special emphasis on the means of grace. And although Brorson remained a loyal son of the established church, he wrote his finest hymns on those phases of Christianity most earnestly emphasized by the movement to which he belonged. While this is only what could be expected, it indicates both his strength and limitation as a hymnwriter. He was above all the sweet singer of Pietism.

The hymns of Brorson that appeared during his lifetime were all written within the space of four years. In that brief period he composed a volume of songs that rank with the finest in the Christian church, and just as he might have been expected to produce his finest work, he discontinued his effort. The hymns of the *Swan-Song*—which we shall discuss later—though written for his own edification, indicate what he might have attained if he had continued to write for publication. His reason for thus putting aside the lyre, which for a little while he had played so appealingly, is unknown. Some have suggested that he wrote his hymns according to a preconceived plan, which, when completed, he felt no inclination to enlarge; others have surmised that the new and ardent duties, bestowed upon him about this time, deprived him of the leisure to write. But as Brorson himself expressed no reason for his action, no one really knows why this sweet singer of Pietism so suddenly ceased to sing.

#### *Chapter Ten*

## Brorson's SWAN-SONG

THE PIETIST MOVEMENT, new and numerically small when the Brorsons aligned themselves with it, made such sweeping progress that within a few years it became the most powerful movement within the Danish church. And in 1739, it ascended the throne in the persons of King Christian VI and his consort, Queen Sophia Magdalene of Kulmbach, an event of great significance to the fortunes of the Brorsons.

In Denmark the king is officially the head of the church. At the time of Brorson all church appointments belonged to him, and King Christian VI, if he had so wanted, could thus have filled all vacancies with adherents of the movement in which he sincerely believed. He was, however, no fanatic. Earnestly concerned, as he no doubt was, to further the spiritual welfare of his subjects, his only desire was to supply all church positions at his disposal with good and able men. And as such the Brorsons were recommended to him by his old tutor and adviser in church affairs, John Herman Schaefer. On this recommendation, he successively invited the brothers to preach at court. Their impression upon him was so favorable that within a few years he appointed Nicolaj to become pastor of Nicolaj church in Copenhagen, one of the largest churches in the capital, Broder to become Provost of the cathedral at Ribe and, two years later, Bishop of Aalborg, and Hans Adolph to succeed his brother at Ribe and, four years later, to become bishop of that large and historically famous bishopric. Thus the brothers in a few years had been elevated from obscurity to leading positions within their church.

Contemporaries express highly different estimates of Brorson as a bishop. While praised by some, he is severely criticized by others as unfit both by ability and temperment for the high office he occupied. This last estimate now is generally held to be unjust and, to some extent at least, inspired by jealousy of his quick rise to fame and by antagonism to his pietistic views. A close examination of church records and his official correspondence proves him to have been both efficient in the administration of his office and moderate in his dealings with others. He was by all accounts an eloquent and effective speaker. Although Ribe was a small city, its large cathedral was usually crowded whenever it was known that Brorson would conduct the service. People came from far away to hear him. And his preaching at home and on his frequent visits to all parts of his large bishopric bore fruit in a signal quickening of the Christian life in many of the parishes under his charge. He was, we are told, as happy as a child when he found pastors and their people working faithfully together for the upbuilding of the kingdom. But his own zeal caused him to look for the same earnestness in others. And he was usually stern and, at times, implacable, in his judgment of neglect and slothfulness, especially in the pastors.

His private life was by all accounts exceptionally pure and

simple, a true expression of his sincere faith and earnest piety. A domestic, who for many years served in his home has furnished us with a most interesting account of his home life. Brorson, she testifies, was an exceptionally kind and friendly man, always gentle and considerate in his dealing with others except when they had provoked him by some gross neglect or inattention to right and duty. He was generous to a fault toward others, but very frugal, even parsimonious in his home and in his personal habits. Only at Christmas or on other special occasion would he urge his household to spare nothing. He was a ceaseless and industrious worker, giving close personal attention to the multiple duties of his important position and office. His daily life bore eloquent witness of his sincere piety. When at home, no matter how busy, he always gathered his whole household for daily devotions. Music constituted his sole diversion. He enjoyed an evening spent in playing and singing with his family and servants. If he chanced to hear a popular song with a pleasing tune, he often adopted it to his own words, and sang it in the family circle. Many of the hymns in his *Swan-Song* are said to have been composed and sung in that way.

His life was rich in trials and suffering. His first wife died just as he was preparing to go to Copenhagen for his consecration as a bishop, and the loss affected him so deeply that only the pleading of his friends prevented him from resigning the office. He later married a most excellent woman, Johanne Riese, but could never forget the wife of his youth. Several of his children preceded him in death, some of them while still in their infancy, and others in the prime of their youth. His own health was always delicate, and he passed through several severe illnesses from which his recovery was considered miraculous. His heaviest cross was, perhaps, the hopeless insanity of his first-born son, who throughout his life had to be confined to a locked and barred room as a hopeless and dangerous lunatic. A visitor in the bishop's palace, it is related, once remarked: "You speak so often about sorrows and trials, Bishop Brorson, but you have your ample income and live comfortably in this fine mansion, so how can you know about these things?" Without answering, Brorson beckoned his visitor to follow him to the graveyard where he showed him the grave of his wife and several of his children, and into the palace where he showed him the sad spectacle of his insane son. Then the visitor understood that position and material comfort are no guaranty against sorrow.

A very sensitive man, Brorson was often deeply afflicted by his trials, but though cast down, he was not downcast. The words of his own beloved hymn, "Whatever I am called to bear, I must in patience suffer," no doubt express his own attitude toward the burdens of his life. His trials engendered in him, however, an intense yearning for release, especially during his later years. The hymns of his *Swan-Song* are eloquent testimonies of his desire to depart and be at home with God.

With the passing years his health became progressively poorer and his weakening body less able to support the strain of his exacting office. He would listen to no plea for relaxation, however, until his decreasing strength clearly made it impossible for him to continue. Even then he refused to rest and planned to publish a series of weekly sermons that he might thus continue to speak to his people. But his strength waned so quickly that he was able to complete only one of the sermons.

On May 29, 1764, he begged a government official to complete a case before him at his earliest convenience "for I am now seventy years old, feeble, bedridden and praying for release from this unhappy world." Only a day later, his illness took a grave turn for the worse. He sank into a stupor that lasted until dusk when he awoke and said clearly, "My Jesus is praying for me in heaven. I see it by faith and am anxious to go. Come quickly, my Lord, and take me home!" He lingered until the morning of June 3, when he passed away peacefully just as the great bells of the cathedral announced the morning service.

Several fine memorials have been raised to his memory, among them an excellent statue at the entrance to the cathedral at Ribe, and a tablet on the inside wall of the building right beside a similar remembrance of Hans Tausen, the leader of the Danish reformation and a former bishop of the diocese. But the finest memorial was raised to him by his son through the publication of *Hans Adolph Brorson's Swan-Song*, a collection of hymns and songs selected from his unpublished writings.

The songs of the *Swan-Song* were evidently written for the poet's own consolation and diversion. They are of very different types and merit, and a number of them might without loss have been left out of the collection. A few of them stand unexcelled, however, for beauty, sentiment and poetic excellence. There are songs of patience such as the inimitable:

Her vil ties, her vil bies,  
 Her vil bies, o svage Sind.  
 Vist skal du hente, kun ved at vente,  
 Kun ved at vente, vor Sommer ind.  
 Her vil ties, her vil bies,  
 Her vil bies, o svage Sind.

which one can hardly transfer to another language without marring its tender beauty. And there are songs of yearning such as the greatly favored,

O Holy Ghost, my spirit  
 With yearning longs to see  
 Jerusalem  
 That precious gem,  
 Where I shall soon inherit  
 The home prepared for me.  
 But O the stormy waters!  
 How shall I find my way  
 Mid hidden shoals,  
 Where darkness rolls,  
 And join thy sons and daughters  
 Who dwell in thee for aye.  
 Lord, strengthen my assurance  
 Of dwelling soon with Thee,  
 That I may brave  
 The threatening wave  
 With firm and calm endurance;  
 Thyself my pilot be.

And there is "The Great White Host", most beloved of all Brorson's hymns, which Dr. Ryden, a Swedish-American Hymnologist, calls the most popular Scandinavian hymn in the English language. Several English translations of this song are available. The translation presented below is from the new English hymnal of the Danish Lutheran churches in America.

Behold the mighty, whiterobed band \*)  
 Like thousand snowclad mountains stand  
 With waving palms  
 And swelling psalms  
 Above at God's right hand.  
 These are the heroes brave that came  
 Through tribulation, war and flame  
 And in the flood  
 Of Jesus' blood  
 Were cleansed from sin and shame.  
 Now with the ransomed, heavenly Throng  
 They praise the Lord in every tongue,

\*) Another translation: "Like thousand mountains brightly crowned" by S. D. Rodholm in "World of Song".

And anthems swell  
 Where God doth dwell  
 Amidst the angels' song.

They braved the world's contempt and might,  
 But see them now in glory bright  
 With golden crowns,  
 In priestly gowns  
 Before the throne of light.  
 The world oft weighed them with dismay,  
 And tears would flow without allay,  
 But there above  
 The Saviour's love  
 Has wiped their tears away.  
 Theirs is henceforth the Sabbath rest,  
 The Paschal banquet of the blest,  
 Where fountains play  
 And Christ for aye  
 Is host as well as guest.

All hail to you, blest heroes, then!  
 A thousand fold is now your gain  
 That ye stood fast  
 Unto the last  
 And did your goal attain.  
 Ye spurned all worldly joy and fame,  
 And harvest now in Jesus' name  
 What ye have sown  
 With tears unknown  
 Mid angels' glad acclaim.  
 Lift up your voice, wave high your palm,  
 Compass the heavens with your psalm:  
 All glory be  
 Eternally  
 To God and to the Lamb.

Brorson's hymns were received with immediate favor. **The Rare Clenod of Faith** passed through six editions before the death of its author, and a new church hymnal published in 1740 contained ninety of his hymns. Pietism swept the country and adopted Brorson as its poet. But its reign was surprisingly short. King Christian VI died in 1746, and the new king, a luxury-loving worldling, showed little interest in religion and none at all in Pietism. Under his influence the movement quickly waned. During the latter part of the eighteenth century it was overpowered by a wave of religious rationalism which engulfed the greater part of the intellectual classes and the younger clergy. The intelligentsia adopted Voltaire and Rousseau as their prophets and talked endlessly of the new age of enlightenment in which religion was

to be shorn of its mysteries and people were to be delivered from the bonds of superstition.

In such an atmosphere the old hymns and, least of all, Brorson's hymns with their mystic contemplation of the Saviour's blood and wounds could not survive. The leading spirits in the movement demanded a new hymnal that expressed the spirit of the new age. The preparation of such a book was undertaken by a committee of popular writers, many of whom openly mocked Evangelical Christianity. Their work was published under the title **The Evangelical Christian Hymnal**, a peculiar name for a book which, as has been justly said, was neither Evangelical nor Christian. The compilers had eliminated many of the finest hymns of Kingo and Brorson and ruthlessly altered others so that they were irrecoGNIZABLE. To compensate for this loss, a great number of "poetically perfect hymns" by newer writers—nearly all of whom have happily been forgotten—were adopted.

But while would-be leaders discarded or mutilated the old hymns and, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, sought to force their new songs upon the congregations, many of these clung tenaciously to their old hymnal and stoutly refused to accept the new. In places the controversy even developed into a singing contest, with the congregations singing the numbers from the old hymnal and the deacons from the new. And these contests were, of course, expressive of an even greater controversy than the choice of hymns. They represented the struggle between pastors, working for the spread of the new gospel, and congregations still clinging to the old. With the highest authorities actively supporting the new movement, the result of the contest was, however, a foregone conclusion. The new enlightenment triumphed, and thousands of Evangelical Christians became homeless in their own church.

During the subsequent period of triumphant Rationalism, groups of Evangelical laymen began to hold private assemblies in their own homes and to provide for their own spiritual nourishment by reading Luther's sermons and singing the old hymns. In these assemblies Brorson's hymns retained their favor until a new Evangelical awakening during the middle part of the nineteenth century produced a new appreciation of the old hymns and restored them to their rightful place in the worship of the church. And the songs of the Sweet Singer of Pietism have, perhaps, never enjoyed a greater favor in his church than they do today.

## Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig the Singer of Pentecost

THE LATTER PART of the eighteenth and the earlier part of the nineteenth century produced a number of great changes in the spiritual, intellectual and economic life of Denmark. The strong Pietist movement at the time of Brorson, as we have seen, lost much of its momentum with the death of King Christian VI, and within a few years was overwhelmed by a wave of the intellectual and religious Rationalism then engulfing a large part of Europe. Religion, it was claimed, should be divested of its mysteries and reason made supreme. Whatever could not justify itself before the bar of the human intellect should be discarded as outworn conceptions of a less enlightened age. The movement, however, comprised all shades of opinions from pure agnosticism to an idealistic belief in God, virtue and immortality.

Although firmly opposed by some of the most influential Danish leaders of that day, such as the valiant bishop of Sjælland, Johan Edinger Balle, Rationalism swept the country with irresistible force. Invested in the attractive robe of human enlightenment and appealing to man's natural intellectual vanity, the movement attracted the majority of the upper classes and a large proportion of the clergy. Its adherents studied Rousseau and Voltaire, talked resoundingly of human enlightenment, organized endless numbers of clubs, and—in some instances—worked zealously for the social and economic uplift of the depressed classes.

In this latter endeavor many pastors assumed a commendable part. Having lost the old Gospel, the men of the cloth became eager exponents of the "social gospel" of that day. While we may not approve their Christmas sermons "on improved methods of stable feeding," or their Easter sermons "on the profitable cultivation of buckwheat," we cannot but recognize their devoted labor for the educational and economic uplift, especially of the hard-pressed peasants.

Their well-meant efforts, however, bore little fruit. The great majority of the people had sunk into a slough of spiritual apathy from which neither the work of the Rationalists nor the stirring events of the time could arouse them.

The nineteenth century began threateningly for Denmark, heaping calamity after calamity upon her. England attacked her in 1801 and 1807, robbing her of her fine fleet and forcing her to enter the European war on the side of Napoleon. The war wrecked her trade, bankrupted her finances and ended with the severance of her long union with Norway in 1814. But through it all Holger Danske slept peacefully, apparently unaware that the very existence of the nation was threatened.

It is against this background of spiritual and national indifference that the towering figure of Grundtvig must be seen. For it was he, more than any other, who awakened his people from their lethargic indifference and started them upon the road toward a happier day spiritually and nationally.

Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, like so many of Denmark's greatest men, was the son of a parson. He was born September 8, 1783, at Udby, a country parish in the south-eastern part of Sjælland. His father, Johan Ottesen Grundtvig, was a pastor of the old school, an upright, earnest and staunch supporter of the Evangelical Lutheran faith. His mother, Catherine Marie Bang, was a high-minded, finely educated woman with an ardent love for her country, its history, traditions and culture. Her son claimed that he had inherited his love of "song and saga" from her.

The Grundtvigs on both sides of the family were descendants of a long line of distinguished forebears, the most famous of whom was Archbishop Absalon, the founder of Copenhagen and one of the most powerful figures in 13th Century Denmark. And they still had relatives in high places. Thus Johan Edinger Balle, the formerly mentioned bishop of Sjælland, was a brother-in-law of Johan Grundtvig; Cathrine Grundtvig's brother, Dr. Johan Frederik Bang, was a well-known professor of medicine and the stepfather of Jacob Peter Mynster; and her younger sister, Susanna Kristine Steffens, was the mother of Henrik Steffens, a professor at the universities of Halle and Breslau, a friend of Goethe and Schiller, and a leader of the early Romantic movement, both in Germany and Denmark.

Cathrine Grundtvig bore her husband five children, of whom Nicolaj was the youngest. But even with such a large household to manage, she found time to supervise the early schooling of her youngest son. She taught him to read, told him the sagas of his people and gave him his first lessons in the history and literature, both of his own and of other nations.

It was a period of stirring events. Wars and revolutions raged in many parts of Europe. And these events were eagerly followed and discussed in the parsonage. Listening to his elders, Grundtvig saw, as it were, history in its making and acquired an interest in the subject that produced rich fruits in later years. The wholesome Christian life of his home and the devotional spirit of the services in his father's church also made a deep impression upon him, an impression that even the scepticism of his youth could not eradicate.

But his happy childhood years ended all too quickly. At the age of nine he left his home to continue his studies under a former tutor, Pastor L. Feld of Thyregod, a country parish in Jylland. There he spent six lonely but quite fruitful years, receiving among other things a solid training in the classical languages. In 1798, he completed his studies with Rev. Feld and enrolled in the Latin school at Aarhus, the principal city of Jylland. But the change proved most unfortunate for young Grundtvig. Under the wise and kindly guidance of Rev. Feld he had preserved the wholesome, eager spirit of his childhood, but the lifeless teaching, the compulsory religious exercises and the whole spiritless atmosphere of his new school soon changed him into an indifferent, sophisticated and self-satisfied cynic with little interest in his studies, and none at all in religion.

At the completion of his course, however, this attitude did not deter him from enrolling at the University of Copenhagen with the intention of studying for the ministry. A university education was then considered almost indispensable to a man of his social position, and his parents earnestly wished him to enter the church. Nor was his attitude toward Christianity greatly different from that of his fellow students or even from that of many pastors already preaching the emasculated gospel of God, Virtue, and Immortality which the Rationalists held to be the true essence of the Christian religion. Believing the important part of the Gospel to be its ethical precepts, Grundtvig, furthermore, prided himself upon the correctness of his own moral conduct and his ability to control all unworthy passions. "I was at that time," he later complained, "nothing but an insufferably vain and narrow-minded Pharisee."

From this spirit of superior self-sufficiency, only two things momentarily aroused him during his university years—the English attacks upon Copenhagen; and a series of lectures by his cousin, Henrik Steffens.

Steffens, as a student at Jena, had met and become an enthusiastic disciple of Schelling, the father of natural philosophy, a pantheistic colored conception of life, opposed to the narrowly materialistic views of most Rationalists. Lecturing at the university during the years 1802-1803, Steffens aroused a tremendous enthusiasm, both among the students and some of the older intellectuals. "He was a fiery speaker," Grundtvig remarks later, "and his lectures both shocked and inspired us although I often laughed at him afterward."

Despite his attempt to laugh away the impression of the fiery speaker, Grundtvig, nevertheless, retained at least two lasting memories from the lectures—the power of the spoken word, a power that even against his will could arouse him from his cynical indifference, and the reverence with which Steffens spoke of Christ as "the center of history." The human race, he contended, had sunk progressively lower and lower from the fall of man until the time of Nero, when the process had been reversed and man had begun the slow upward climb that was still continuing. And of this progress the speaker in glowing terms pictured Christ as the living center.

Grundtvig was graduated from the university in the spring of 1803. He wished to remain in Copenhagen but could find no employment and was forced, therefore, to return to his home. Here he remained for about a year, after which he succeeded in obtaining a position as tutor for the son of Lieutenant Steensen Leth of Egelykke, a large estate on the island of Langeland.

Except for the fact that Egelykke was far from Copenhagen, Grundtvig soon became quite satisfied with his new position. Both the manor and its surroundings were extremely beautiful, and his work was congenial. His employer, a former naval officer, proved to be a rough, hard-drinking worldling; but his hostess, Constance Leth, was a charming, well-educated woman whose cultural interests made the manor a favored gathering place for a group of like-minded ladies from the neighborhood. And with these cultured women, Grundtvig soon felt himself much more at home than with his rough-spoken employer and hard-drinking companions.

But if Grundtvig unexpectedly was beginning to enjoy his stay at Egelykke, this enjoyment vanished like a dream when he suddenly discovered that he was falling passionately in love with his attractive hostess. It availed him nothing that others as he well knew might have accepted such a situation with complacence; to

him it appeared an unpardonable reproach both to his intelligence and his honor. Having proudly asserted the ability of any intelligent man to master his passions, he was both horrified and humiliated to discover that he could not control his own.

Grundtvig never consciously revealed his true sentiment to Constance Leth. At the cost of an intense struggle, he managed outwardly to maintain his code of honorable conduct. But he still



Nicolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig

felt humbled and shaken by his inability to suppress his inner and as he saw it guilty passion. And under this blow to his proud self-sufficiency, he felt, perhaps for the first time in his life, the need for a power greater than his own. "To win in this struggle," he wrote in his diary, "lies beyond my own power. I must look for help from above or sink as the stone sinks while the lightly floating leaves mock it and wonder why it cannot float as they do."

The struggle against his passion engendered a need for work. "In order to quiet the storm within me," he writes, "I forced my mind to occupy itself with the most difficult labor." Although he

had paid small attention to the suggestion at the time, he now remembered and began to read some of the authors Steffens had recommended in his lectures: Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, Fichte, Shakespeare and others. He also studied the work of newer Danish writers, such as Prof. Jens Møller, a writer on Northern mythology, and Adam Oehlenschlaeger, a young man who, inspired by Steffens, was becoming the foremost dramatic poet of Denmark. He even renewed the study of his long neglected Bible. The motive of his extensive reading was, no doubt, ethical rather than esthetic, a search for that outside power of which the battle within him revealed his urgent need. Thus he wrote:

My spirit opened its eyes,  
Saw itself on the brink of the abyss,  
Searched with trembling and fear  
Everywhere for a power to save,  
And found God in all things,  
Found Him in the songs of the poets,  
Found Him in the work of the sages,  
Found Him in the myths of the North,  
Found Him in the records of history,  
But clearest of all it still  
Found Him in the Book of Books.

The fate that appears to crush a man may also exalt him. And so it was with Grundtvig. His suffering crushed the stony shell of cynical indifference in which he had long enclosed his naturally warm and impetuous spirit and released the great latent forces within him. In the midst of his struggle, new ideas germinated springlike in his mind. He read, thought and wrote, especially on the subject that was always near to his heart, the mythology and early traditions of the Northern peoples. And after three years of struggle, he was at last ready to break away from Egelykke. If he had not yet conquered his passion, he had so far mastered it that he could aspire to other things.

Thus ended what a modern Danish writer, Skovgaard-Petersen, calls "the finest love story in Danish history." The event had caused Grundtvig much pain, but it left no festering wounds. His firm refusal to permit his passion to sully himself or degrade the woman he loved had, on the contrary, made it one of the greatest incitations to good in his whole life.

On his return to Copenhagen Grundtvig almost at once obtained a position as teacher in history at Borch's Collegium for boys. His new position satisfied him eminently by affording him a chance

to work with his favorite subject and to expand his other intellectual interests. He soon made friends with a number of promising young intellectuals who, in turn, introduced him to some of the outstanding intellectual and literary lights of the country, and within a short while the list of his acquaintances read like a Blue Book of the city's intelligentsia.

Although Grundtvig was still quite unknown except for a few articles in a current magazine, there was something about him, an originality of view, an arresting way of phrasing his thoughts, a quiet sense of humor, that commanded attention. His young friends willingly acknowledged his leadership, and the older watched him with expectation. Nor were they disappointed. His **Northern Mythology** appeared in 1808, and **Episodes from the Decay of Northern Heroism** only a year later. And these strikingly original and finely written works immediately established his reputation as one of the foremost writers of Denmark. There were even those who in their enthusiasm compared him with the revered Oehlenschlaeger. A satirical poem, "The Masquerade Ball of Denmark," inspired by the frivolous indifference with which many people had reacted to the English bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, showed his power of burning scorn and biting satire.

In the midst of this success and the preparation of plans for new and more ambitious works, Grundtvig received a request from his old father to come home and assist him with his parish work. The request was not at all pleasing to him. His personal attitude toward Christianity was still uncertain, and his removal from the capital would interfere with his literary career. But as the wish of his good parents could not be ignored, he reluctantly applied for ordination and began to prepare his probation sermon.

This now famous sermon was delivered before the proper officials March 17, 1810. Knowing that few besides the censors would be present to hear him and feeling that an ordinary sermon would be out of place before such an audience, Grundtvig prepared his sermon as an historical survey of the present state of the church rather than as an Evangelical discourse.

His study of history had convinced him of the mighty influence Christianity had once exerted upon the nations, and he, therefore, posed the question why this influence was now in decline. "Are the glad tidings," he asked, "which through seventeen hundred years passed from confessing lips to listening ears still not preached?" And the answer is "no". Even the very name of Jesus is now with-